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DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES

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DOUBTS & DIFFICULTIES

by

CYRIL ALINGTON

HEAD MASTER OF ETON
HON. FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD
CHAPLAIN TO THE KING

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

AND

AN ANIMADVERSION ON
THE REV. P. B. CLAYTON, M.C.

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
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INTRODUCTION

IN these days every great question is discussed in all sections of society. The popular Press gives a good deal of space to discussion of religious ideas. Probably this is good on the whole, for anything is better than an unthinking acquiescence which masquerades as belief. But it is inevitable that a great proportion of such discussion should be very superficial. It is more difficult than is supposed by people who have not tried to state the case for Christian doctrine both simply and briefly. It can be done briefly if technical terms, which are a kind of shorthand, may be employed. It can be done in simple language if there is space for full explanation of the ideas represented by the technical terms. But to be simple and brief at once, without being also misleading, is very difficult.

In tackling this difficult job Dr Alington seems to me to have been wonderfully successful; and

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there can be no doubt about the need for it. I hope and believe that great numbers of people will find in this book just that stimulus and direction for their own thoughts which they want.

At one point Dr Alington might have put the case more strongly than he does. He quite rightly recognizes the large number of people outside the churches who are more public-spirited than great numbers inside. But it is also true—as he hints on p. 94 and elsewhere—that when you ask who are doing the day-to-day drudgery of social service or promotion of good causes, you find that the great majority of them are convinced Christians and loyal members of a definite congregation. Too many professing Christians are doing nothing of the sort; and not enough is being done. But nine-tenths of what is being done is done by Christians and in the inspiration of their Christianity.

WILLIAM EBOR.

July 1929.

To the REV. P. B. CLAYTON

MY DEAR TUBBY,—You began all this, and you must take some responsibility for the result. Didn't you say you wanted something written to counteract the propagandists who say Christ never existed? Didn't you come and stay with me at Ramsbury to concoct something of the kind? And, after you'd been there a day, weren't two of us writing like blacks in different rooms while you passed from one to another like a well-nourished slave-driver? And have you ever done a hand's turn of work at it yourself? I leave these questions to your conscience.

Anyhow, as the apologetic Aaron said, "There came out this calf," and I now dedicate it to you. You saw Jim and Mary born, and it only remains to add that since that day she at least has become a rather real person: I don't want you to think that in my letters to her I'm merely

setting up pins to throw at: she's quite real, bless her heart, and I can't help believing there are many like her.

But the responsibility is yours for beguiling a sedate headmaster into such paths, and for bidding him to treat great subjects lightly. I hope you are right in believing that some people who distrust solemnity and won't tackle big books by real theologians will be led by this type of argument to do a little first-hand thinking for themselves.

That will be all to the good, provided they realize that this little book is meant only to suggest lines of thought on some large questions, and not to give an exhaustive account of the Christian faith.

Yours ever,

C. A. A.

MY DEAR DR ALINGTON,—What is this that you have done? Let me rehearse the facts. In 1927, I (like many another) came to you to ask a portion of a book from your own pen. You granted my petition, and went further. That August you assembled other accomplished men who chatted while you wrote at Ramsbury. The laziest of them all, the instigator, hereinafter fled to South America. Then more delays; until there suddenly arrives a packet of long proofs, and, to reward the front of my offending, this magic volume opens with a letter which deals most gently with my faults and derelictions. Now, to crown all, you give me leave to interpose this answer, explaining everything but what I owe you.

Soon you will have new debtors; for I reside in the conviction that what you have here done will not be wasted. When I came snuffing such distinguished legs I was eager to point out to better brains than mine that there was ample

room for something aimed at being readable along the very lines you have pursued. The Canonized are credited with feats of levitation; but most of the books I know on Christian Evidence are ponderous performances. No wonder that the cheerful folk ignore them on the Rectory shelves, breathing their vows that they shall not be borrowed. But they will borrow this, and even buy it; or I'm a Dutchman without more ado.

If any solemn wight should prove sour-minded, and mutter at your opening merriment, let him read on and come to retract his judgment. No sentient man can doubt the passionate sincerity which underlies Part II. In fine, sir, you have brought shining gifts to bear upon the problem I put up to you. God bless you for love's labour. Many a Jim and Mary throughout and beyond Toc H will join me in so saying.

Yours always,

TUBBY.

PART I

PART I

I

My friend Maddison and I are about as unlike as any two people can be: perhaps this accounts for our friendship, and it certainly accounts for the fact that when we are together we spend all our time in arguing. He is scientific by nature, clever with his fingers, accurate in his mind: I am a perfect fool at anything which calls for accurate handling; he loves music: I detest it; I like books: he reads very few—though he has a curious and unexplained passion for Wordsworth. These things being so, a week-end with him and his wife promised as usual to be full of arguments by which neither party was convinced, and we were not far on our way down in his car before we were attacking one another as usual.

“It’s not the least good’ arguing about it,” said Maddison, for about the twenty-seventh time. “I don’t believe in religion—— Hullo, what the devil——!”

The car certainly gave a groan which struck even my unpractised ear as dismal.

“ I’m not at all sure that I believe in Ford cars,” said I. My words were almost prophetic, for the car, as if inspired by a local demon of its own, slewed violently across the road, missed a telegraph pole by inches, and turned over on its side. We extricated ourselves with some difficulty, and while I was engaged in gently patting myself all over to make sure that nothing was missing, Maddison, who appeared to be unhurt, though he was certainly very angry, was making earnest researches into the mechanism of the car.

“ It’s no good,” he said, after a bit ; “ but luckily we aren’t very far from Merchester : I know a chap there who’s just the man for this kind of job ; if you wouldn’t mind waiting here, it oughtn’t to be longer than half-an-hour, if I can get a lift.”

He got a lift, but of course he was longer than half-an-hour before he returned, with an extremely competent-looking man, who, by a series

of manœuvres quite inexplicable to me, restored the car to working order.

“We shall have to bustle a bit now,” said Maddison, “or Mary’ll be in a fearful state of nerves.”

I felt that it would be ungracious in me to compare the risk to my nerves with that to Mary’s, for Maddison is a considerate husband and I am very fond of his wife, but I will not pretend that I enjoyed the rest of our journey.

When we got to the house we found her waiting for us.

“Oh, Jim,” she said, “I’m so glad to see you: I had an awful fright. You haven’t had an accident, have you?”

“Of course not,” he answered, with a wink at me. “The old car wouldn’t come along quite as fast as I wanted to, and we had to stop in Merchester for some shopping.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” said Mary. “It’s awfully stupid of me, but I’d got so frightened.”

“We are a bit late,” said I.

“Oh, it isn’t that,” said Mary; “but about

three hours ago, when I wasn't thinking of you at all, I suddenly had a queer feeling that something had gone wrong. I thought I saw you both lying crumpled up on the side of the road; I can't explain it, but it was quite dreadful. I know I was a fool to think about it, but it was so vivid I couldn't help it."

Maddison glanced at me again with another imperceptible sign to say nothing about it.

"You mustn't let yourself worry about things like that," he said. "Now let's see if you've got any tea: we're both fearfully thirsty, so I hope there's something ready."

We had just settled down to a tea which looked extremely attractive after our adventures, when Mary, who was watching us eat with a benignant air, suddenly exclaimed: "Oh, Jim, I forgot to tell you, Harry was in about an hour ago, awfully upset: his wife's had another bad attack and he can't think what on earth to do. I begged him to have the doctor, but you know what he is: he doesn't believe doctors are the least good, and he wouldn't hear of it in spite of all I could say.

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I wonder if you could possibly persuade him? He's much more likely to listen to you than to me."

Jim smothered an imprecation. "The silly fool!" he said; "I'd better go round at once. I did my best to persuade him last time, but you know what an obstinate brute he is."

"Oh, do finish your tea first," said his wife.

"How bad is she?" he asked.

"She sounded awfully bad from what Harry said," answered Mary.

"Oh, well," said her husband, "then there's no time to be lost: I think I'll go straight to the doctor and take him round, and I don't see how he can refuse to let him in."

II

"Well?" said Mary anxiously, when her husband got back. "What's happened? Did you get him to have a doctor?"

"I didn't give him much chance," said her husband grimly, "and besides, the poor chap was at his wits' end. I just took the doctor in."

"And what did he say?"

"Oh, he gave her something that brought her round, and he says it's—— I forget what he called it, but anyhow he's going to inject a few million germs or bacilli twice a day, and he says she'll be all right in a fortnight."

"Sounds risky to me," I commented.

"It does sound a queer business," Jim agreed, "but he seems to know his job. I can't say I understand anything about it, but after all, he's an expert."

"I thought you hated experts," I put in. "I know when I quoted a bishop to you the other day——"

"Oh, bishops!" he snorted contemptuously. "You know what I think about them. They're paid pretty well for all they say."

"Well, doctors get paid," I said, "and most of them get quite as much as the average parson. I can't see why doctors aren't quite as likely to be prejudiced as parsons."

"There you go again," he said; "you're always talking as if religion was parallel to other things, and you know very well it isn't."

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“ I didn’t say that,” I protested mildly. “ I only said that an expert in anything was more likely to be right than the average outsider.”

“ But doctors can prove their case. They can show you their jolly old bacilli, or whatever they are: they’re scientific, not woolly-headed old women who believe anything they like and shove it down your throat as if it were proved.”

“ That’s all very well,” I retorted; “ a doctor shows you a lot of things under a microscope and you believe all he tells you about them, but you never give a parson a chance of telling you what he believes, and why. You spend half your time slanging them for things they believed centuries ago, which is just like slanging the medical profession for all the rotten cures they believed in in the sixteenth century.”

“ I don’t want to do that,” he said, “ though it’s jolly hard to know what they *do* believe nowadays. But from what I can see there’s precious little evidence that Christ ever existed at all, and I can’t see that there’s any case to answer till they’ve proved that.”

“ Oh, well, there we’ve got something definite,” I said. “ But it’s no good unless you’ve got some clear idea of what proofs you’ll accept. You people have got a standard of proof for scientific affairs which simply doesn’t apply to matters of history.”

“ I don’t see why,” he objected.

“ Well, it stands to reason that the only absolute proof that anything happened is someone who saw it happen, and even that won’t do unless you’re sure he’s an honest man: and there’s no scientific way of establishing that.”

“ Oh, come,” he said, “ there are laws of evidence, all right, and you can check one bit of evidence by another.”

“ Who won the battle of Jutland?” I asked. “ There’s a rare lot of evidence about that, but not much agreement so far as I can see.”

“ There you go again,” he said; “ who won a battle is a matter of opinion, not a matter of fact.”

“ Granted,” said I; “ though you won’t find it quite so easy as you think even to get certain about the facts.”

“Perhaps not in a battle,” he agreed, “but that doesn’t apply to ordinary life.”

“Have you ever read Byron’s letters?” I asked. “I brought one volume down with me, without any malicious purpose, but there’s a passage in it that happens to come in rather handy. There’s a discussion there about Byron’s leg, and what was the matter with it. There’s the evidence of his mother and his doctor and the man who taught him boxing and the man who made his boots, and when you’ve read it all you won’t even know which leg had anything wrong with it, let alone what was the matter.”

I found him the passage and let him read it.

“I allow that’s queer,” he said, “but that only proves how jolly unobservant people are.”

“It proves what a queer thing historical evidence is,” I said. “But if you say Christ never existed I should start by saying, ‘How do you account for Christianity?’ There’s no doubt that exists. To go back to what I said this morning, it’s pretty clear Ford cars exist, and I should be

prepared to bet there was a man called Ford somewhere about."

"Of course there is," he said, "everyone knows that."

"They don't, really," said I, "they've read a lot about him in the papers, but he may be a creation of the Press for all you actually *know*. Still, I agree there is—or was—a man called Ford, to start the car business, and you say Christianity started without Christ. You may be right, of course, but I think we start with the odds the other way."

"I wish you'd get down to your proofs," said Maddison, "and stop jawing about Ford cars—which, by the way, you know nothing about."

"Granted," said I; "but just tell me first how you know anyone existed—anyone in history, I mean. Mahomet, for instance, or Julius Cæsar."

"That's obvious," he said; "everyone who lived about then talks about them. I don't know the authorities myself, but there must be cart-loads of references, and what they tell me about Christ is that the references are precious few and just the sort that might be faked."

“Steady on a moment,” I said, “anything *might* be faked, when you’re dealing with books two thousand years old, but I don’t agree with you that such references as there are look like a faker’s work: they’re too few, for one thing, and they don’t prove enough. If a man was clever enough to fake what we’ve got, he was clever enough to fake a lot more.”

“He might have been clever enough to know just when to stop,” said Maddison, “but I agree that that’s a bit far-fetched. But what about the scarcity of references?”

“Have you ever tried to put yourself back into those times?” I asked. “Here’s a little country, about as big as a small native state in India: here’s a man born as a working man who made a great sensation in his own little district for a year or two, and then got put to death. Supposing that sort of thing happened in India to-day, how much do you think you’d know of it, even with all your newspapers and telegraphs? And how much do you think you’d find in the great writers of the time? Why, I’d bet Kipling and Arnold

Bennett never mention Gandhi, and he's a pretty big fact for the British Empire!"

"But if the movement grew as you say it did, it would be bound to get its mention, wouldn't it?"

"It might or it might not. I believe it's true you could read all Jane Austen without hearing anything about the Napoleonic Wars, though they were going on all the time—and anyhow, no one suggests Christianity was a big force till a good hundred years after Christ's death, and your quarrel with us is that we can't produce evidence long before that. Why, Paul or Peter in Rome wouldn't matter more to the average Roman than a stray lecturer in London: it's a pure toss up whether any big literary man ever hears of his name—and it's only the very biggest literary men whose works have come down to us. The simple fact is that literature and history take account of the big men and don't say anything at all about the average chap like you and me: and all the records we've got tell us that it was among the obscurest of the obscure that Christianity first got hold. You can't blame us for the

very thing we say ourselves, and we boast that our religion started at the bottom of society."

"But your own records," said Maddison, "none of them are anything like contemporary."

"That depends on what you mean by 'anything like,'" I answered. "For Heaven's sake get out of your head that in those days there were newspapers with headlines 'Dangerous riot in Palestine,' and that sort of thing, or that anyone who had anything to say trotted round to a publisher and produced a book. I quite agree it took thirty years or so to get a book written about Christ, but I can't see the least reason to doubt that things were written down before that, and handed about till a man came along who felt up to putting them together."

"I should have thought they'd have done it at once if they thought it such a big thing," said Maddison.

"Aren't you forgetting what sort of people they were?" I asked. "Fishermen aren't generally very good hands at putting things on paper, and there's not a scrap of evidence that any of them was a

literary man: Matthew was a tax-gatherer, so he must have known something about figures, but I don't suspect the man who collects my income tax of being an author, and the rest of them, as I say, were men of their hands. As soon as they did get a man who could write, like Paul, you find him writing fast enough—but you people rule Paul out because he wasn't there at the start."

"Some people say Paul invented the whole thing," said Maddison.

"I know they do: but even they hardly suggest that Paul invented the existence of Christ at a time when there were thousands of people alive to contradict him. No one doubts the genuineness of most of his letters, whether they like their contents or not. But that's another story," I went on; "all I want you to see is that you're asking me to believe that a carpenter never existed in a province because a lot of highbrows in the capital never mention him: because his friends, who were a lot of fishermen, never wrote a book about him directly he died, and that, although he never existed, it never occurred to anyone to doubt it

till a couple of thousand years afterwards. I confess it seems to me that you're asking a mouthful! "

"What's that?" said Mary, who put her head into the study at this moment. "More food? I can't believe it after the tea you ate. And look here, Jim, what about that car of yours? I've just been looking at it, and I'm pretty sure you had an accident after all! "

III

"Rum thing, Mary knowing about that accident, wasn't it?" said Maddison to me, when we were alone after dinner, not without a certain complacency. "It's not the first time, either: seems as if she'd got a kind of second sight—or whatever it's called—where I'm concerned."

"How do you explain it?" I asked.

"Oh, I can't explain it: it's just one of those things that happen."

"My dear Jim," I said, "you make me tired. You call yourself a scientific man, and you're down on me like a cartload of bricks when I

suggest the possibility of a miracle, and when one happens in your own home you purr like a great cat and say it's 'rather rum'! I've no patience with you."

"Anyhow it's not a miracle," he protested; "a miracle's a thing against the laws of nature."

"There you go again," I retorted. "Who said so? You invent a definition of something that couldn't happen and then pat yourself on the back for saying it didn't happen. I never said miracles were contrary to laws of nature: I said they worked by laws of nature which we didn't know. The only difference is that I think there are a lot we don't know, and you only allow for them when you simply can't help it."

"But Mary's second sight doesn't prove Christ could heal the sick."

"Of course it doesn't, you ass: but it does prove that the mind of a dear good ordinary woman can work in a way no one even professes to understand. If you want to 'prove' Christ's miracles of healing, or rather to understand what they were, you'd better look at the accounts of

faith healing at the present day. I'm not an expert, but I see them in the papers, and there's no sort of doubt that there's a lot of evidence for one man's mind working on another man's body. After all, it's silly for you scientific people to talk as if mind and matter were so totally apart : I thought it was one of your beliefs that they were more or less the same."

"I expect there's a lot of bunkum about those faith cures," said Maddison; "people believe they're going to be cured and then it comes off."

"Why in the world shouldn't they believe it if it happens to be true?" I asked. "I quite agree that they've got to have faith: that's just what the Gospel stories say. One man has 'faith to be healed,' and in another place Christ can't do things because of people's unbelief."

"But a lot of the Gospel miracles weren't worked on people at all," objected Maddison, "but on material things: how does faith come in, then?"

"I quite agree they're different," I said, "and I don't say I understand them, but I don't see the point of disbelieving everything I can't

understand. I shouldn't get far nowadays if I didn't use a lot of discoveries which I'm nowhere near understanding. You'd laugh if I said I didn't understand how a car works, but I don't mind saying that waves of sound which get through doors and keyholes and keep their length and shape are absolutely beyond me — and as for wireless——!”

“But other people understand it all right,” he said, “and your miracles no one even professes to understand.”

“You're right up to a point,” I answered, “though I fancy your great men of science use a lot of facts they don't really understand. But what makes me mad is when people swallow things like water-finding without a shadow of explanation, and then refuse even to consider that Christ may possibly have known things they don't know themselves. I met a man the other day who was fearfully excited about a water-finder, hazel-rods twitching, and all the rest of it, and the same chap prides himself on having chucked religion because of miracles.”

“ But a lot of them are a bit steep, aren’t they? Walking on the water, for instance? ”

“ Have you read *To-morrow*, by Alfred Ollivant? It’s not a Christian treatise, but a vision of the future from a scientific point of view. He may be all wrong, but his chief inventor is a chap who’s learnt to walk on the water by using his mind right, and the hero of the book is a man who goes one better and learns to walk the air. For the life of me I can’t see why you men of science are so keen to limit the possibilities.”

“ But even if a man could do those things it wouldn’t go anywhere near proving he was God.”

“ Of course it wouldn’t, and that’s just why Christ never used his miracles to show himself off: that was exactly what the devil suggested in the Temptation—just the sort of rotten thing the devil *would* suggest. Christ always said that to believe in Him because of His works was a poor kind of belief, and it’s a silly argument to use now.”

“ Well, what do you say about them, then? ”

“ What we say is that if Christ was the sort of

man we believe He was, and made the sort of impression the Gospels say He made, it's only natural that He should have had more power than any other man we know about. We don't know what the powers were, but we aren't prepared to put limits to them. You come in with your jolly rules and say things are impossible. You're every bit as bad as the Church used to be in the Middle Ages; in fact the whole position's got reversed. The Church used to say there's no more knowledge to be had, and did its level best to prevent any discoveries being made: and you, all honour to you, stuck to it and said, 'Who's going to limit the possibilities?' Now it's all the other way: you're doing the limiting and we're sticking up for the possibilities. You can't have it both ways. Either we know all we're ever going to know about the powers of the human mind, or we don't: and if we don't, who's going to say the greatest man that ever lived mayn't have been a few thousand years before his time? It's exactly what great men have a way of being."

"I don't see that proves anything, really," said Maddison.

"Of course it doesn't," I answered. "I'm not trying to prove anything except that you're an inconsistent brute."

"Well, if you've quite finished, let's come and listen to the loud-speaker," said Maddison. "I may be inconsistent, but I do like certainties, and your possibilities leave me cold."

IV

We listened, for what seemed to me an interminable time, to what I am assured on good authority was a very remarkable concert. When the loud-speaker showed signs of giving some really interesting information on athletic topics Maddison turned it off abruptly.

"Well, there can't be any sort of doubt," he said, turning to me, "Beethoven is absolutely top-hole."

"I entirely disagree," said I.

"That's only because you're a complete idiot," he retorted; "everyone with any sense knows he's just about as good as he can be."

"Prove it," said I.

"Don't be such a fool," he said; "anyone with a grain of music in him knows it's true."

"I don't deny," I replied, "that you can quote a long list of people who've written a lot of ecstatic nonsense about him, but I don't call that proof."

"You can't prove a matter of taste," he said.

"Oh, if it's only a matter of taste," I answered, "I am quite ready to give in. I thought you began by saying that there couldn't be any doubt about it, and if it's only a matter of taste all your musical friends may have changed their minds in a few hundred years."

"I don't care how many people change their minds," he said: "Beethoven is first-rate, whatever anybody says."

"As a matter of fact," said I, "I am rather inclined to believe you're right. All I want you to see is that it can't possibly be proved. There are a good many thousand people like me who haven't got an ear, and who would much rather have silence than the best music; many of us

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are quite respectable people, of average intelligence, who pay our taxes regularly; we don't belong to any party: there's no sort of reason for accusing us of prejudice, we're only stating what appears to us to be a fact, that the noise your friend makes appears to us to be a nuisance. You can abuse us as much as you like, but you can't say we don't exist, and as long as we exist the thing can't be proved."

"I see what you're trying to get at," he said; "you want to trap me into allowing that all your religious nonsense is true, but I am not going to be caught like that."

"I don't want to trap you into anything," I said. "I only want you to realize that you can believe a thing from the bottom of your heart without having any convincing arguments to give. I am no more *convinced* by your experts than you are by mine: the difference is that you deny me a right to my convictions and I don't deny your right to yours. If I'd turned my wireless on to give you a sermon on Christian Evidences you'd have left the room. Why, as

it is, you wouldn't allow me to hear who'd won the match."

"It is rather bad luck," said Mary, who had been listening patiently to our discussion. "I am going to give him his turn now."

She turned on the loud-speaker, but it was too late. All I heard was: "In five minutes there will be an address by Dr Walford Davies on 'Harmony.'"

"Thank you very much," I said; "I quite appreciate your kindness, but I think I have had enough for one evening."

V

"How did you get the car mended?" asked Mary, next morning at breakfast; "it must have been pretty well broken up."

Maddison didn't seem to like the question.

"I went into Merchester and got a man," he said, rather sulkily.

"Not to Freeman's?" asked Mary. "Don't tell me you went there."

"Yes, I did," said her husband defiantly, "and

what's more, if you will have it, I got Willis to come out and see to the car, and a jolly good job he made of it."

"That brute?" said Mary. "Oh, Jim—I'm ashamed of you! I'd rather have walked home."

"Oh, Willis is all right," said Jim, but I could see he didn't like the subject, and he changed it at once by asking about plans for the day.

I took the opportunity of returning to it when we were smoking our after-breakfast pipe.

"Who's Willis?" I asked; "and why does Mary feel so strongly about him?"

"It's just like a woman," Maddison growled; "she thinks he behaved badly to me and she's never forgiven him for it."

"But did he?"

"No, Willis couldn't very well help himself: I don't blame him. He was all wrong, but he couldn't have known it."

"But what happened?"

"Oh, it's a good while ago now. I started at Freeman's, you know, and while I was there a chap got sacked for stealing. I said if he went

they'd have to sack me too, and so I went. Willis was the foreman and did the sacking. That's all."

"But I don't see how you come into it."

"Well, you see, I knew the chap, and I was dead certain he couldn't have stolen a halfpenny. All the evidence was dead against him: the money was found in his coat and he'd had a chance of taking it. What made it worse was that he told a lie about where he was: got a bit rattled, I suppose. I don't see how anyone could have doubted it, if they hadn't known."

"But how did you know he hadn't?"

"I didn't know he hadn't, if you see what I mean: I just knew him, and that was enough for me. But I never had any feeling against old Willis: he just couldn't help himself: we're quite good friends—always were."

I lay back in my chair and laughed.

"What in the world is there to laugh at?" Jim asked indignantly.

"Why, you," I said, "you quixotic old ass! You're always cursing me for believing things

without evidence, and here you chuck your job because you believe something in the teeth of all the evidence there was."

"I don't think that's fair," he said. "I said I accepted the evidence as good enough ground for sacking the man: I only said I didn't believe it."

"Yes, I see that, but I should have thought it might have left you wondering whether evidence was the only thing."

"It's all you've got to go by, anyhow. And you've got to go by it."

"Yes, in a court of law, though don't tell me you think the law court's the best place for truth. And I've no doubt it's all right in a laboratory too; but we aren't in law courts or laboratories most of the time, thank goodness, and what you people will not see is that we needn't always play the game as if we were. Why, you can't prove anything you really care about! Mary's fond of you, isn't she?"

"Of course she is," said Jim indignantly, "but what's that got to do with it?"

"Where's your evidence?" I asked. "Oh, I

quite agree she shows a certain amount of affection—an indecent amount at times—but what's her motive? Here are you, a young man with good prospects, quite worth being civil to; and what about your will? I bet you've left her all your money."

"Of course I have, but——"

"Why, there you are!" I said triumphantly. "There's motive enough for all her blandishments. Don't tell me you'll convince a jury of your fellow-countrymen that she doesn't know about your will. Can you swear she doesn't know what's in it? Come now, Mr Maddison, Yes or no! Are you prepared to deny that Mrs Maddison is acquainted with that document? And you ask us to believe that it has no influence on her actions? Come, Mr Maddison, be honest with the gentlemen of the jury!"

"What an ass you are!" said Maddison, laughing. "You said last night that a lot of things couldn't be proved, and you may be right. But what I say is that there are a jolly lot that *might* be proved about your religious ideas,

and they can't be proved, and you won't even try."

"I don't mind trying, or rather I shouldn't mind if *you* wouldn't mind telling me what sort of things they are, and if you'd agree that some sorts of things are beyond evidence."

"Perhaps some sorts are," he agreed, "but I'm talking of matters of fact."

"Such as?" I asked.

"Oh, everything—who wrote the Gospels, when they were written, whether they're accurate, and all that: why, people don't even agree in what language they were written."

"It's funny you should say that," I said. "I quite agree one ought to know about the language, and I thought we did, but I happened to see an argument the other day about the 'scrap of paper'—whether the phrase started in German or English, and it's quite impossible to be sure."

"That is a bit queer," he agreed, "but it doesn't get us far."

"Of course it doesn't, but it's another instance of the difficulty of getting at facts, and you're

asking me to give you certainties about how four books came to be written two thousand years ago. I believe they grew, as I was saying the other night. Some people talked, and some people wrote down what they heard, and some other people put them together. That's the way things *do* happen—or rather did, before printing came in."

"And who's to tell it didn't get exaggerated as it went on—sort of Russian scandal, you know?"

"I dare say it did, in details: you'll find that allowed for in any decent book about the Gospels. And I dare say the writers made mistakes: most people do; but what we say is that the general picture is perfectly clear and perfectly honest."

"Oh, come," he said, "if a man exaggerates and makes mistakes you can't expect anyone to trust him."

"Not in a laboratory," I agreed; "but what about your friend who told a lie?—that didn't prevent you from believing in him."

"No," he admitted, "it was only natural he should."

"There you are," I said, "'only natural.' It's

natural to most people to blunder when they aren't on oath and aren't conducting a scientific experiment, but that doesn't rule them out. There never was a sillier rule than *falsus in uno falsus in omnibus*. You might just as well say I won't read any Wordsworth because some of his poetry is unbelievably bad."

I knew that would touch him, for Jim is an ardent Wordsworthian.

"It's not parallel at all," he said. "Sometimes Wordsworth was inspired and sometimes he wasn't."

"All right," I said, "sometimes Luke was inspired and sometimes he wasn't. What about it?"

"Oh, don't let's begin arguing about inspiration," said Maddison; "we shouldn't ever agree."

"I didn't begin it," I remarked; "all I object to is your scheme of Inspiration Limited—limited to poets you happen to like."

"Let's get back to your writers," he said; "you say they made mistakes——"

“ I don’t,” I interrupted; “ *they* do. They tell us how often they misunderstood and got snubbed for it: that’s one of the things I like them for; but I allow it makes me think they *may* have made other mistakes without knowing it.”

“ All right, they *may* have made mistakes—and they did exaggerate: why go on believing them? ”

“ Just on the same grounds on which you believed your friend—general grounds. They produced a picture which has really knocked the world sideways: half the people who curse Christianity are prepared to honour the Christ they describe, and most of the reforms in the Western world have come from people trying to follow Him.”

“ But why shouldn’t the whole thing be a fake? Why shouldn’t they have made up the picture? ”

“ In the first place, because no one did that sort of thing then: you *will* forget that that sort of fiction wasn’t written for centuries later; and in the second place, because we’ve no sort of reason to think they were clever enough; and in

the third place, because if they did they did it so jolly badly."

"Badly? What on earth do you mean?"

"Why, my good chap, if you and I were going to fake a Gospel, do you mean to say we shouldn't do it better? They leave gaps all over the place. Fancy writing a life of Christ without ever mentioning Him preaching in Jerusalem! And fancy being such an idiot as to make Him say 'how many times' He'd tried to win Jerusalem over, when on your own showing He'd never been there since He was a boy! Why, anyone could beat that!"

"Oh, now you're going to ask me to believe them because they're so bad, are you?"

"No, I'm only trying to convince you that they're honest. Any historian will tell you that's the first thing he wants to know. If a writer's honest you can make allowance for his bias, or his lack of knowledge, or his tricks of style, or whatever it is; but if he's an honest man he's worth your reading, and if the Gospels aren't honest literature in that sense I'll eat my hat."

“ I notice you stick to the Gospels, and don’t say much about the rest.”

“ Well, that’s because you asked about them, but of course they’re the heart of the whole thing. I expect you really want a chance to say that the Old Testament isn’t nearly as good as the New, and that I’m a humbug if I’m not prepared to say it is.”

“ Not quite that,” he said; “ but you must allow there are some jolly queer things in the Old Testament.”

“ Of course there are; it’s the whole literature of the Jews—at least as far as I know. They never wrote anything else worth speaking of, and if you took all the English literature you’ve got, from Caedmon to, say, Spenser, you wouldn’t expect it to be all of equal value.”

“ But it all professes to be the truth about God and His actions.”

“ So it does, because that was the only thing they thought worth writing about: they may have been wrong, but it wasn’t silly. Anyhow the Old Testament’s the best chance you get of seeing

how ideas grow, and that's quite as interesting a growth as any of those 'cultures' you get in museums. I remember your taking me once to see an egg in different stages: it nearly made me sick, but I never thought of blaming it for not being a chicken from the start."

"You're always going off on some new point," said Maddison; "I wish you'd stick to one at a time! There may be something in what you say, but if I *have* to choose a book beginning with a 'B,' it's Bradshaw for me all the time."

And he emphasized his offensive remark by chucking one at my head.

"Thank you very much," I said, when I had recovered from the shock: luckily Bradshaw is a comparatively soft work. "That'll be very useful in case I want to leave your hospitable roof in a hurry: but I wish I knew why you liked Bradshaw so much."

"All facts there and no frills," he said; "you know just where you are with old Bradshaw."

"That's where I think you're wrong," I replied, opening the book. "At the moment I'm

at Sowerby Bridge and Rishworth, and I've no idea where they are."

"But it tells you the facts you want to know," said Jim.

"Only on one condition," I retorted.

"What's that?"

"That you look at the right page," I answered. "Bradshaw's just as bad as the Bible if you use it as a lot of your friends do. They open at Obadiah and say it's got no spiritual teaching, which is just like a man who wants to go to Birmingham opening at the Hastings, Brighton and Portsmouth line."

"But some of the books of the Old Testament are no earthly good, and every page of Bradshaw's got some truth in it anyhow."

"There *are* 253 pages of advertisement," I said, looking at the beginning, "but I agree it's mostly about locomotion; but it's locomotion of all kinds, and some goes a lot slower than the other. There are pages in the Old Testament which get you along the road pretty fast, and others which take you down pretty dingy little

side-lines. Bradshaw's a hard book to read through unless you're a railway fiend, and not many people since Ruskin have read the Bible all through several times as a boy. A lot of it is very stiff reading and doesn't do much to help you, but look at this"—I opened the book at random—"Port Clarence, Haverton Hill and Billingham-on-Tees. Port Clarence, dep. 5.37 A.M. Who ever wanted to do that? And all, so far as I can see, in the hope of getting to West Hartlepool by 7.40 A.M.!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Maddison, "I never knew such a chap for turning round what one says. You people stand on morality, so far as I know, and you put out a book full of lots of bad morality, all ascribed to God, and then you wonder we don't like it."

"Ah, now you're talking!" I said. "Well, we say the morality we stand on is in the New Testament, and the rest is only valuable as giving the background. It's just like literature (if you won't mind another parallel). The whole point of reading the early stuff is to get

a background to Chaucer or Shakespeare: if the early people do anything good, so much the better; but if you're in a hurry, and want great literature, don't read them."

"But bad morals are much worse than bad literature."

"Granted: but it's a longish time since any responsible Christian went to the Old Testament for morals."

"Oh, I don't really quarrel with Christian morals," said Maddison, "except for two things—one, that you don't practise them, and the other, that you talk as if morality was the only thing that mattered."

"Your first point's all right," I said, "and your second is sound as far as it goes. I agree that we've sometimes been uncommonly blind to the value of Truth and Beauty, and talked as if what we call Goodness was the only thing. It drove the artists into opposition first of all, and now it's driving out the men of science. As I see it, we're all like men doing a jigsaw puzzle and we've all three fixed on different parts of the

picture. As I believe it's one picture, and you believe it too, I can't see why we can't agree to go on at our own jobs without squabbling. I believe all the truth you scientists can find out comes from God, and you believe (at least I think you do) that all our morality comes from Nature. You may be right or we may be right, but I can't see why we can't stop fighting and get on with the job."

"Most of you people are always slanging science," said Maddison, "and talking as if it hadn't any right to exist."

"Oh, well," I said, "I think I've heard men of science do just the opposite; but I quite agree it's bad whoever does it—it's irreligious in us and it's unscientific in you, and I don't know which you regard as the greater offence."

"I know which I'd rather not commit," he said, grinning; "but, to come back to our original argument, isn't it much the simplest explanation to say that the whole Christ story is an exaggeration of something which, I agree, may have happened? I'll agree, too, that the Gospel

writers may not have been conscious frauds but, as you say, honest men liable to mistakes. Isn't it much the simplest explanation to say that they unconsciously exaggerated Christ's importance and that you people have gone on exaggerating it ever since?"

"Much," I said.

"Well, then?" said he.

"My dear chap," I said, "do you really mean to stand up there and tell me that the simplest explanation's usually the true one? Why, the whole progress of science lies in getting behind the simple explanation! What's the simple explanation of day and night, except that the sun goes round the earth, as everyone thought till Galileo started his jolly idea? What's the simple explanation of any disease, except the ideas that old country people had till you came along with your bacilli? And as for electrons and ether and all the rest of it, I believe they're all true, but I've never met anyone yet who said they were simple."

"You trace a thing back to its causes——"
Maddison began.

“You trace the chicken back to the egg,” I interrupted, “and then the whole round begins again: where does the egg start? You know as well as I do that you’ve not the foggiest idea how things began, and that your geologists and biologists can’t get within a million years of agreement. And you’ve no hope of getting to a first cause, though you know there must be one. Well, we say it all started with God—‘In the beginning, God’—the first words of the Old Testament you laugh at. We agree it’s a hypothesis: we never say we know; we only say we believe, and all we ask is leave to work out our hypothesis by acting on it, just as you do yourselves. And you butt in, saying, ‘Oh, you mustn’t act on an unproved hypothesis,’ just as if every scientific discovery hadn’t started just that way. Oh, you make me tired!”

“But you insist that you’re right, and won’t leave other people alone.”

“I do think that’s rather strong! You will go on talking as if we were living in the days of the Inquisition. I say the boot’s on the other leg now.

If I heard of a distinguished scientist who'd robbed a till, or run off with somebody else's wife, I shouldn't make a song and dance about it and say that showed he knew no science; but if a bishop drops a brick about a scientific fact, you all say, 'There, look at your teacher of religion!' Perhaps you mean it as a compliment, by implying that we ought to be perfect—and I agree we ought—but we aren't; only I do say we have learnt not to want to persecute people who are out for truth."

"What about a man who comes to stay for a week-end and won't let his host get a wink of sleep on a Sunday morning?" said Maddison. "If that isn't religious persecution I should like to know what is."

"All right," I said, "I forgive you for all your harsh words. Only leave me with Bradshaw. I've got a new idea. There are four main lines: let's see, that'll be the Psalms, Isaiah, Deuteronomy, I think, and what'll be the fourth? The others, you see, are all inferior branches associated with them; but for quick traffic stick to the main system."

“What rot you do talk!” said Maddison patiently.

“Or no, I’ve got it: the Histories (that’s the Southern Railway, because it’s the slowest), the Prophets—that’s the Great Western, which all decent people want to go by—the Psalms, and the Wisdom books, which both go the same sort of way.”

“But they all go different ways,” said Jim, with the air of one humouring a tiresome child.

“On the contrary,” said I, throwing the book back at him. “Try again and you’ll see they all go to London, and I should think that’s the first time going to London has been used as a synonym for going to God!”

VI

“I’ve been thinking over that evidence business,” said Maddison, as we set out for our after-luncheon walk, “and I’m inclined to agree that when one knows a person well, evidence doesn’t count for much. My difficulty is that in this religious business we aren’t dealing with a person

anyone knows, but with a lot of old stories of pretty obscure events.”

“Of course there is an answer to that,” I said, “though I’m not the person to give it: there have been people in every century who’ve claimed that they *did* know Christ though they hadn’t seen Him. I can’t expect you to accept that, but you’ve got to take account of it as a fact.”

“*They* believe it all right, I dare say, but I can’t see why I should. It’s pretty easy to persuade yourself of a thing you want to believe; but there’s no sort of proof.”

“Any more than there is any proof that I’ve got a toothache, beyond my saying I feel it: if I do feel it, it looks as if I’d got it, however I managed it.”

“But all that’s purely personal,” he objected.

“That doesn’t mean it isn’t real,” I retorted: “but I don’t believe it is any good our arguing about Reality. The only thing I want you to see is that you scientific people can’t leave persons and their beliefs and their feelings out of it

altogether: they're part of the problem you've got to explain, if you're out to explain the world, as I think you are."

"I'll give you one thing," he said. "Science isn't nearly so mechanical as it used to be. In old days people thought the mechanical sciences had the key of the hutch in their pocket, but that doesn't suit the biologists: I'm not a biologist, but I read some of their stuff and I see it doesn't fit into the old arguments."

"That's the most hopeful thing about the whole business," I agreed. "We think the whole key of the business lies in personality. We are persons, and we think that's a pretty strong argument in favour of a personal God. As a man said the other day, there's very little to show we aren't machines, except that no one can imagine a machine which knew it was a machine. If we know we are, then we aren't—at least we're a totally different kind of machine to any I've ever heard of."

"It's a rum thing, personality," said Jim slowly. "Mary hauled me off to church the

other day, much against my will, to hear a chap preach. Now most of what he said was just ordinary, rotten arguments and no eloquence, but one could see there was a lot behind it: the little chap meant every word he said, or rather it meant a thundering lot to him. I liked him quite a lot."

"It's just the same in Parliament," I said; "you'd think they'd like them eloquent, but I'm sure they like them honest more. There was a chap—Lord Althorp, wasn't it?—who had to be kept from cutting his throat every time he went to the House, and he was about the most popular leader they've ever had."

"It's the same everywhere," said Jim, "except when you come to the laboratory. If a little pipsqueak finds out a new truth I don't care a blow for his character: he delivers the goods, and that's enough for me."

"There we are back again," I said; "you won't believe that your laboratories aren't the centre of the world. They're the centre of a tremendously important bit of the world's activities,

but they aren't life, and they don't touch the most important bits of it."

"They may, one day," said Jim.

"They may," I agreed; "but, I ask you, do you really see the faintest chance of a formula which is going to produce Shakespeare? I'm all for eugenics, but I'm not going to ask eugenics for Beethoven or Darwin! How many great men have had great sons? You've got to allow that you're up against something too big for you there."

"You always love getting off into mysteries!" he said.

"I dare say you're right," I answered. "As I was saying this morning, I'm all against limiting the field of inquiry. I think this is a mysterious world, and is always likely to stay so: most of the fun I get out of literature and you get out of music depends on the mystery being there: I don't mean we don't want to penetrate it where we can, for I'm not afraid of our ever getting to the end of it, but I don't believe in ruling it out and pretending it's not there."

"There's something in that," he agreed; "but it

seems to me that we've got to make up our minds what matters most. You people keep hammering away at morality, but that really isn't a monopoly of yours. I know lots of scientific men whose lives are every bit as good, even by your standard, as anyone could want. I hate the assumption that Christians are the only good people."

"So do I; and I haven't ever heard it made except by some perfect imbecile. We've no business to say we're good, but only that we believe we know what goodness is and how you get there. A man may know all the rules about playing golf or cricket and be beaten hollow by a chap who doesn't, but you can't say that proves theories aren't any use."

"No, a man with a good eye will beat a man with a bad one every time."

"Yes; but, other things being equal, a man with a sound theory will improve his game far faster than the other."

"Well, all I can say is, if you've got the theory it doesn't show much in the average Christian game."

"Granted; but I'm inclined to believe you've

got most of the people with a good eye on your side. There's a parable which always comforts me a bit. Do you remember the man who made a feast and invited a lot of guests who wouldn't come, and then they had to fetch in a lot of wretched scallywags out of the highways and hedges? I like to think that we average Christians are the highway and hedges people, who have to fill up the places because you other delightful people won't come."

"That's the most complimentary thing I've ever heard you say," said Jim. "I don't suppose you really mean it. Anyhow, on the strength of it I'll invite you to tea! Come along, we ought to be getting home."

VII

"He's been jawing about personality all the afternoon," said Jim, as Mary poured out the tea. "You really must take him on; I'm simply worn out."

"Your husband's personality," said I, "is a delightful one, ever full of fresh surprises."

"Oh, Jim's all right," said Mary; "but what have you really been arguing about? Religion, I suppose?"

"Of course," said Jim. "He wants me to agree that nothing really matters except persons."

"How much does Mary matter to you?" I asked.

"Now you're being personal!" he retorted.

"I always am," I replied, "and so are you, though you keep on trying to forget it."

"Don't wrangle," said Mary; "but tell me, quietly, what it's all about. Jim can go to sleep."

"Well, my argument is that we're persons, and God's a person, or how in the world did we get here? And if that's so, and persons are the highest form of creation, isn't it likely that if God showed Himself He'd show Himself in a Person? Well, there you are. We Christians say He did, and I can't see how any sane man can deny that Christ's personality has had more influence for good than that of anyone in history: it simply isn't worth arguing. Jim wants to pretend that it was all made up by a lot of people we've never

heard of, who all put their heads together and invented a character and faked a story. There's not a scrap of evidence for his belief, so he spends his time picking to pieces the evidence for mine—a very cheap performance, for anyone can pick holes in historical evidence. Look at the man who proved Bonaparte had never existed!”

“ I only said it was the simplest explanation,” Jim began.

“ And I only said that simple explanations were the explanations of simpletons,” I interrupted.

“ It's much simpler to believe that Bacon wrote Shakespeare. Twice as simple, for then you'd only have one great man to account for instead of two, but it's only simpletons who believe it.”

“ I suppose Christianity has done a lot,” said Mary doubtfully, “ but the Great War wasn't a very Christian show.”

“ There's a pretty good lot left to do,” I agreed, “ but as for what it's done—well, I read a story about Lowell the poet the other day: some people were slanging Christ, and he got up and said: ‘ Show me a country where life is safe, and

women are honoured, and justice is done, and the sick are cared for, where Christianity hasn't prepared the way, and then I will listen to your insults against my Master! ' "

" I wish there weren't so many rotten Christians about," said Mary, with a sigh. " I drag Jim to church now and then, but really the services, and the sermons! And I can't say the parson does much in the parish."

" That's the only real argument," I said, " and it's appallingly strong, but there's one thing I should like to say. Do you play the piano?"

" I used to when I was a girl," said Mary, " but I gave it up; I made such a fearful row."

" Has it ever occurred to you," I said, " how many people are making fearful rows on the piano at this moment? It's an appalling thought, and I don't want you to dwell on it."

" I won't," said Jim, with a slight shudder.

" And has it ever occurred to you," I added, " to regard that as any sort of argument against the piano? It's a very difficult instrument, and that's one of the reasons why we admire it. But

a bad piano player is no more of an argument against music than a bad Christian is against Christianity. On the other hand any first-rate pianist proves it's a good instrument, and worth learning; and a good Christian—and, after all, there are a few of them about—proves something definite about Christianity."

"That's all very well, but you can't deny that most of what one sees isn't very attractive—not very sporting, if you see what I mean."

"Rather not; it started as a great adventure, and it looks as if it had become a respectable organization. That's quite true. Christianity's like a great new road which takes you through a lot of fresh country and you see things you never dreamt were there, and in a few years people build houses by the side and settle down on it, and it gets to look like any old bit of country. That's always the danger when any big idea gets organized; but you can't get on without organizations, however little you like them."

"I suppose not," said Mary doubtfully, "but need they always be so dreadfully dull?"

“No, it’s mainly our fault; but you’ve got to remember it’s not all as dull as all that. Foreign Missions aren’t respectable and aren’t dull, but jolly few people know anything about them. I bet you didn’t know that when the C.M.S. started about 1800 there wasn’t one man, woman or child in this country who’d go out and work for them. There’s been a rare lot of heroism of one kind and another in the mission field in the last hundred years, and, if it comes to that, a man who really tries to tackle an East End parish isn’t quite without the sporting spirit.”

“But everyone says the religious life of the country’s dying——”

“My dear Mary,” said I seriously, “I hope you make a point of never believing what everybody says. There never was a time in the history of this country when so many people went to church because they wanted to, or did so much work for it for so little reward. It used to pay to go to church; it doesn’t now: it used to pay to be a parson; it doesn’t now: nowadays you’re much more likely to be thought a fool. I don’t

believe much in counting heads, but I can't see any reason for people sticking to Christianity now except that they think it true, and that means that all the heads you do count are worth counting."

"I wish they had a bit more inside them," said Jim.

"Rather cheap, my dear Jim," I said; "in any society of any kind there are bound to be far more stupid people than clever. Disraeli wasn't stupid because the Conservatives are the stupid party, and there's quite enough intellect in the Church of England to keep it going. I don't want to quote names at you, but it wouldn't be hard to produce a dozen Christians with brains as good as any you'll find elsewhere. It's a rotten sort of argument, but you drove me into it."

"A fearful lot of clever people haven't any use for it, anyway."

"A fearful lot of clever people get their thinking on some subjects done uncommonly early and at second-hand. A man who isn't interested

in a subject hasn't any right to an opinion. Besides, if you're going to claim all the people who for one reason or another can't be bothered about religion, I might claim all the unorthodox poets who believe in a truth they can't explain, and all the unorthodox artists who believe in a beauty they can't define. They don't call themselves Christians, but they've no sort of use for a scientific world,

'where nothing is but that which we can see.'

What about Blake seeing 'heaven in a wild flower'? He's much more likely to agree with a man who sees heaven in love than with one who doesn't believe in heaven at all!"

"Let's come back to the church-goers," said Mary. "I'm sure there must be some reason why they're all such a dull lot."

"It's because we're all so abominably lazy: it's far less trouble to rest on the past than to think of the future; that's why Mohammedanism is such a popular success and also such a fearful failure. We ought to remember that there are far

more jobs ahead of us than those in the past, and that if Christianity's any use at all it's because it's a religion of the future. Wilberforce and Co. gave it a job nobody expected; Shaftesbury gave it another, and religion in this country is waiting for someone to give it one now. That's the best of Christianity: it looks dead, and everyone gets ready for the funeral, and then the corpse gets up and makes a scene, and everything has to be started all over again."

"There's no end to your comparisons for Christianity," said Jim, laughing. "You said it was like rabbits yesterday as far as I remember, but I've no idea why."

"Because when once you get it into a country it's jolly hard to get it out," I answered. "But I expect Mary's had enough of this, and I'm going to leave my host and hostess to entertain one another while I go and write a few letters."

VIII

"The worst of it is," said Jim, as he settled down in his chair after dinner, "that there's no

decent card-game for three, except Jacoby, and Mary can't keep her temper when she plays that. Besides, perhaps you don't play cards on Sundays? So I suppose we shall have to let you go on talking! What do you think you've proved by all this jaw?"

"Nothing," I answered. "I never expected to prove anything. I think I've suggested that some things are beyond proof, and that some evidence you believed isn't as good as you thought. I hope I've made you see that there are other kinds of truths besides those of science, and that they can't be tested in the only ways you call scientific; and I've stated my belief that Christianity, or rather Christ, is responsible for a great deal of what you value in civilization, and may yet be responsible for more."

"I don't think I want to quarrel with any of that," said Jim. "Well, you've suggested a mouthful, as the Americans say; I take it that's the lot."

"Not it," said I; "I've left out the biggest bit."

"Good lord!" said Maddison, "what in the world is that?"

"God," I answered. "We've been arguing all the time as if the only thing that mattered was our appreciating evidence and getting some idea of God, as if He was an interesting object to put under a microscope. The whole point of our belief is that God isn't dead, but very much alive, reaching out to us as we reach out to Him."

"And how are you going to prove that?" he asked.

"I can't prove it," I answered, "but it's only fair to state it, and you've got to listen. Can't you see that, if there's anything in our idea that God is Love, He can't be inactive? What sort of Love would it be that sat still and let other people hunt for it? If God is Love, you can't leave His side of it out."

"But is He? That's just the question."

"It looks like it to me. Here you've got man, admittedly the best thing they've made up to date, the crown of creation as they say. And what's the thing that really marks him out from the beasts? Not that he talks, and makes fires and cooks, and all that sort of thing, but that he

knows he's got to give himself away. He doesn't do it, but he knows he ought to. Why, if you saw a child drowning and didn't go in and try to save it, any coroner's jury in the country would say you were a cad. 'Shocking behaviour of bystander,' and all that. It's no good your saying you're a bad swimmer, and that your life's more valuable, and that Mary'd miss you, and that it looks a rotten sort of child; they'd be down on you like one o'clock, and then go home and swindle their customers or sweat their workmen or whatever it is, but they all know when they're on their oath that a man's got to be unselfish whether he likes it or not."

"And what then?" said Jim.

"What then? Why, where did they get it from? Not from the monkeys from whom they're descended, not from learned books about Social Obligation, but from God who made them—at least I think He did; and if He put those ideas into them it stands to reason He's got them Himself."

"Very pretty," said Jim, "but where's your evidence?"

“ We call revelation the evidence: we say that when Christ came He said God was exactly like that, and He claimed to know. He said the best way to start thinking about God was to call Him a father. Everyone knows what a father ought to be, even if he’s had a bad one, or even if he’s been a bad one himself. Do you remember the saint who consoled the child who’d forgotten how to say his prayers? He said ‘Just go on saying Our Father, and you won’t be far wrong.’ That was Christ’s theory of God, and there’s no denying it worked in His case. It isn’t very sensible to say a man’s results are all right but his theory’s all wrong, which is what a lot of you chaps say. We say it worked in His case, and we believe it would work in ours, if only we weren’t such cowards and fools as not really to give it a trial.”

“ Yes, it’s all very well to talk like that, but a Father one never sees isn’t very like a father one sees all the time.”

“ That’s just why Christ said such a lot about prayer. He meant us to be always talking things over with God, and getting to look at them, and

people too, and everything that happened, from His point of view. Of course we've made prayer into a sort of penny-in-the-slot machine: you put in a prayer, and if you don't get what you want you say the machine is out of order. That wasn't Christ's idea; and prayer isn't mainly petition, unless you mean a petition to understand and be allowed to help. Fancy a child which never said anything to its father except 'Give me a shilling!' "

"It wouldn't be much of a conversationalist," Jim agreed. "I see it would be a pretty big thing to be in touch with God, but isn't it a finer thing to do things on one's own?"

"I never heard such an unscientific suggestion! You might just as well say everyone ought to swim the Channel (as so many people do nowadays) instead of going by steamer.

"Can't you see it all depends on whether God exists or doesn't? Surely if He does—and the only sort of evidence is that of the people who claim to have found Him—and there aren't so few as you believe—it's silly to leave Him out just for the fun of seeing how far you

can get on your own. Unaccompanied singing's all very well for those who can do it, and very good it sounds, but most people won't and can't lift up their voices without an accompaniment. And if the accompaniment's there all the time, so that a man can feel, if he does his best, that he's in tune with it, and that it will carry him through even if he does go wrong, where's the sense of telling the poor brute to sing by himself? We think God's there, with a care for everyone and a purpose for everyone, anxious to be in touch with us, but respecting our freedom too much to force His help upon us. We think His power is everywhere, like the air which gets in when you open the windows. But so many of us keep them shut. Think of all the people who died in stuffy rooms while the sunlight and the air which might have saved them were kept out in the name of medicine! We're just like that; we shut our eyes, and ears, and hearts, and our powers of loving and serving die for lack of nourishment, and all the time there's God's world before us and God's people in it, and a

life of adventure calling to us. I don't say all this is certain, mind you. I'm not sure God meant us to have too many certainties: quite possibly it wants a bit of risk to bring out what's best in us; Christ talked as if it did. I quite agree there are any amount of things we don't know and can't even guess at, but it's a theory of life which hangs together, and you can't say it's one to be ashamed of."

"No, I don't say that," said Jim slowly. "I shouldn't be ashamed of being a Christian if I was one, but I'm afraid I shouldn't make much of it."

"Yes, that's where the shame comes in: we ought to be ashamed of making so appallingly little of it. We say we are, every time we go to church, but we aren't. If we lived up to our formulas you'd soon see the world begin to move. All one can say is that the formulas don't seem to expect it of us. To me the most cheering thing about the whole Communion service is that every time I go I'm expected to say I intend to lead a new life, as if I'd been up to date the failure I know I am."

"Not very cheerful, is it?" said Jim.

“ I don’t know. Isn’t it the spirit behind all your scientists? How many experiments fail for every one that comes off? Can’t you imagine Pasteur saying ‘Next time,’ just as we do? And what about the scientists who never did bring it off? I don’t think there’s any epitaph better worth having than ‘There goes another faithful failure.’ Nothing succeeds like failure, just as nothing fails like success.”

“ Oh, if you’re going to be epigrammatic I’m going to bed,” said Jim, rising, with a laugh.

“ Well, let’s part in peace,” I said. “ Here’s a verse of Matthew Arnold for you; I dare say he had more sympathy with you than me, though I’m not sure:

‘ Charge once more then, and be dumb!
 Let the victors, when they come,
 When the forts of Folly fall,
 Find your body next the wall.’

For the forts of Folly hold your enemies as much as mine, and if I believe Christ is the Way to go and the Life to lead, I’m just as sure He is the Truth to find.”

PART II

PART II

NOT long after the discussions described in the preceding pages I received a letter from Mrs Maddison, which gave rise to those which follow. I have her permission to quote as much of what she wrote as will explain the answers: she refuses to allow me to quote her criticisms, which were often much to the point. She began by saying that while she agreed generally with what she had heard me say, there were a good many points on which she desired further explanation, and ended with the following questions:

1. *What evidences are there to show that Christ was God? Did He think Himself divine? How does one confute the people who say they believe He existed but don't believe He had a divine power: and those who say it doesn't matter what ideal any man follows as long as he has one—i.e. that Buddha or Confucius or Christ all have the same effect—or may have—and*

if a man is honest and upright and pays his debts no one can grumble? The answer ought to be that Christ is divine, but how do we know? And are all the pagan gods—like Krishna and Osiris and Hercules—spontaneous expressions of a desire for one God: should the inspiration rise in us all?

2. *What do you say to the people who say Christianity is all very well, but that the real powers to-day are force, wealth, self-interest, competition, etc., and that Christ's teaching doesn't apply to-day? Especially when it is those people who say that if God exists He wouldn't allow battle, murder and sudden death, just the things produced by what they said were the real powers. How can you show that they're completely wrong—when we can't even say that all the crimes are committed by people who aren't Christians! Is the only way to convince people by example? if so, no lifetime is long enough. You can't even say that Christians are better than other people. I do know that Christianity's contribution to civilization is enormous—but then you can't say that actual civilization is the object of missionaries. What is?*

3. *About going to church. Is there anything to show*

what kind of church Christ wanted—or what sort of teaching? I like to believe what you say, that the quality of the church-going is better now, even if the quantity isn't. But why don't people go to church? If I try to think quite honestly why I don't go more often, there seem to be hundreds of reasons, and the main one's very stupid, but enough to prevent me all the same. I like being there, but I look upon it somehow as a duty and an example to others, and I don't want to feel that I'm doing it because it is a duty and therefore I don't want to go. One is so afraid of imagining that one could possibly set an example to anyone; or of consciously setting one!

In the Middle Ages, did the Church become such a power because it preached eternal damnation? Can the loss of that idea possibly be said to be a reason why people don't go—or is it because they aren't interested, and think they're doing their duty just as much by weeding the garden? So many people never think about it at all, except to say that they can't see what good it does, to them personally. What can one say to show people that it is wanted? The answer is partly, I suppose, go oneself!

4. *Is there any evidence of the existence of the after-life? The Bible makes heaps of references to it but never says anything about it. It says there are "many mansions." But people do long to know more about it when their most beloved ones die. And if there were more evidence, people ought to be happier when someone dies than they are, instead of letting it wreck their lives as they do. And when people try to establish a communication with the next world—can that all be deception and trickery, or queer tricks of the subconscious mind? Must one take the next world utterly on trust? One can't ruin one's prospects in it in this world—or can one?*

One doesn't want to feel that one is leading the right kind of life in order to ensure oneself a better time afterwards. Yet aren't we partly supposed to believe in future rewards and so on? I believe that's why many people don't do very much about religion; they don't want to feel that they're storing up moral credit for themselves, for instance, by going to church.

I

MY DEAR MARY,—What a lot of questions! I'll do my best, but I can't promise to answer them

all. I'd better start with the biggest, Why do we say Christ is God?

Well, about that, the first thing to do is to make sure that we agree as to what the question means: a lot of people ask it, or deny it, or anyhow talk about it without even bothering to understand it. It isn't *only* a question of words, I needn't say, but still words have a right to be used properly, unless you pay them extra—like Humpty-Dumpty. For instance, I'm not at all sure it's not a heresy to say God is a person, but I'm quite sure it's true to say He's personal. But that's another story!

When you say, "Was Christ God?" you're asking a question which the Apostles never put to Him or to themselves. They couldn't have thought, any more than you can think, that Jesus, while here on earth, was directing the whole course of the world, which I suppose is what, roughly, most people think of as being God's special work. What they did come to believe was that He was in a relation to God so unique that special words had to be found for it. They had

one ready to their hand when they called Him Christ, or the Messiah, and that was certainly as far as they had got by the Crucifixion. When, as they believed, He rose from the dead, they realized that His connection with God was closer than they had dared to believe before, but they weren't "theologians," and didn't bother to work out a theory. It's very lucky for us they didn't, for theology is a science which needs to be expressed in exact language, and they hadn't the knowledge or the language at their command.

St Paul had, and he began the attempt, which we've been making ever since, to express the relation of Christ to God. It is an attempt which is bound to fail, but I want you to notice that it fails, not because it isn't true, or worth trying to do, but because human knowledge is scanty, human imagination weak, and human language an extremely inaccurate vehicle. Just try to think how difficult it is to describe anything, from a sunset to a headache, in language which really conveys just what you clearly mean! And when you want to explain ideas—an idea like love,

for instance—you're driven into metaphors and symbols at once: musicians like you say that music can express things that words can't, and I dare say it's true, though it doesn't convey much to me: anyhow let's agree that words break down and, at the best, only hint at what they mean to say.

Well, St Paul gave some hints: to call Christ the Son of God is a hint. It clearly means that Christ shared the nature of God as perfectly as a son shares the nature of his father, but it's clearly only a hint, for the idea of sonship at once suggests a lot of other ideas which are quite out of place. If you want another, and a less ambiguous, hint take the phrase in the Creed, Light of Light, which of course means Light coming from Light—*lumen de lumine*— $\phi\hat{\omega}\varsigma \epsilon\kappa \phi\hat{\omega}\tau\omicron\varsigma$. The sun's in heaven, and stays there (luckily for us), but we say, and quite truly, that the sun is in the room or in the garden: it's real sun, and sometimes, though seldom in this country, as much sun as we can bear, and here on earth it does promote life to an extent which we're only

just beginning to realize—but I mustn't go off on that topic or this letter would be endless. I only want you to realize that Christ showed on earth as much of the Divine as could be shown in one short human life, just as the sunlight brings as much sun as is good for us into this planet. Oh yes, of course it's a metaphor, or a symbol, or a hint, but I think it's a good one.

St Paul has another which is possibly better (though I doubt it), and certainly easier. He said Christ was "the picture of the invisible God." Well, pictures are very useful things to make us realize things we can't see. I'm writing in a great room with pictures by Van Dyck, Kneller and Peter Lely on the walls, and I'm coming to realize Charles I. and his unpleasant sons in a way I never did before. A great picture implies a great deal more than it says: you do feel that you get to know the person behind it, even though you only see him in one particular position. I see Charles I. sitting with his wife and family: it's a far cry from that to Whitehall, but after looking at him through the eyes of Van

Dyck I think I can see him on that tragic day
when he

Bow'd his comely head
Down, as upon a bed.

And in the same way when I see how Christ dealt with sinners, and stupid people and murderers, I begin to have an idea how God eternally thinks of them. Oh, it's a metaphor and a hint, I agree, but I began by saying that that was all you had a right to expect, and anyhow it's all you'll get!

And then, of course, St John did some more for us: people worry a great deal about the difficulty of the Prologue, but the fundamental idea is quite simple. He calls Christ "the Word"—that is to say, the expression of God: just as we express our nature by what we say, so God expresses Himself in Christ. He expresses Himself in all His works, which are the things by which we can know Him, but in Christ the expression became clear for all men to understand—God's expression of Himself in human form, the Word becoming flesh for our sakes. "In Christ," as, I

think, Streeter has said, "the meaning of the universe is spoken out."

Mercifully the Church of England has never tied itself to a particular philosophy in expressing its theology. You have to use the philosophy of your own time in expressing a theology, and as philosophy is a growing science it's always getting out of date, and then there's all sorts of trouble! All the row about Transubstantiation comes because people have long ceased to talk about "substance" and "accident" in the way philosophers used to do: if I said the taste and colour and consistency of bread and wine were an "accident" no one would have any idea what I meant. Similarly if you try to talk about the nature of God you're bound to talk philosophy, and I'm not going to do that, first because you couldn't bear it, and secondly because I'm no philosopher.

But there's one little illustration I might give you, though I don't want you to make too much of it. When I was your age one of the real great difficulties was to see how Christ could possibly

be both God and Man: it seemed to be nonsense to talk of anyone's having two "consciousnesses," one divine and one human. I don't say it isn't a difficulty still. Modern psychology is still in its infancy, but its discoveries about the unconscious depths of our mysterious personality show that the whole matter is by no means so simple as it used to look. I don't say psychology's solved the problem, but it does suggest a new way of looking at it, and I know old Archbishop Temple used to say that psychology was going to supply the terms of the theology of the future.

But I'm getting out of my depth, and possibly out of yours: anyhow it's time this letter came to an end. What I really want to say is that the essential Christian doctrine is that Christ is divine: I don't mind your saying, "Aren't we all divine in a sense?" because of course we are, and Christ condescended to speak of us as His brothers, because I believe that if you start from that you will come to see that whereas we are "divine" by fits and starts, for a moment or two now and then, He was divine all the time

and in everything He did or said. It's nonsense to say that a difference of quantity doesn't make a difference of quality: I dare say even I could play one note as well as Paderewski! If you hold on to what you believe to be divine in yourself, it will bring you day by day nearer to realizing how fully and completely divine He was, and your faith in His divinity will grow, even though you haven't the language in which to express it. "He became human that we might become divine"—it was no less a dogmatist than Athanasius who said that; and I'm sure the diviner we become the better our theology will be: I don't feel nearly so certain that it would work so well the other way round!

II

MY DEAR MARY,—Ever since I wrote to you last I've had a horrid fear that you might think I was running down theology, and encouraging you to take the extremely cheap view that it doesn't matter what people believe. So I'm going to hurry on to another of your questions which practically amounts to that.

DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES

It's very plausible, because, like most things which are frequently said, it's got some truth in it. I forget who said "Conduct is three parts of life," but I'm sure when he said it he thought he was saying something fearfully clever and unorthodox, whereas the silly ass was grossly understating the case. Of course conduct is the whole of life: the whole point of religion is to make a man conduct himself properly, and the whole question is what is proper conduct. It stands to reason that if God exists the fact must affect your conduct: it's silly not to say your prayers: it's silly not to recognize Him by your actions, and those are clearly matters of conduct. If He doesn't exist, there are some things you won't do: if He does, you will: and that's all there is to it.

But what people really mean is that it matters more what you do than what you believe, and that's obviously true, if you've got to choose. I don't say the Church has always thought so, but there are a lot of things the Church has done which no Christian can defend. In this case we

happen to have a saying of Christ which deprives us of any excuse: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God": and, even apart from that, it is clear that Christ spent much of His time on earth in telling people how to behave.

But when these people go on to suggest that the way you behave is not closely connected with what you believe, they're demonstrably talking nonsense, and nonsense which they wouldn't dare to utter except in talking about religion. If you suggested to a golf player or a cricketer that the only thing to do was to hit the ball, they'd tell you at once that there are right and wrong ways of doing it, and that if you don't know what they are you'll never make a player. And supposing you then said to your cricketer, "Oh, I see you think that it's more important to know the theory than to play well!" he would change the subject as quickly and as politely as he could.

But that's just the sort of nonsense people talk about religion. The man who makes most runs is the most valuable bat on the side, but he's far

more likely to do so if he knows the principles of the game, and, similarly, if we're to get right conduct we're much more likely to get it if we've got some sound principles—which means true principles—behind us. The strong man with a good eye and a good wrist will hit the ball farther than the feeble player who has read all the books on the subject, but he'd improve his game indefinitely if he took the trouble to learn.

Well, that's just what we feel about non-Christians: they may be much better performers than we are—in fact they often are, as I was saying to you the other day—but what we do feel is that they'd be better still if they knew a bit more, and anyhow that if we hadn't the knowledge we have we should do infinitely worse.

I quite agree that the Church hasn't always talked like that; I remember a famous Oxford don who took me out for a walk when I was an undergraduate to impress on me that the writers of the Athanasian Creed meant to say, "Socrates is damned." I dare say they did, though if they did they put it very badly (see the last verse

but one), but anyhow we don't mean it now. We're only too glad to say that he or Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus was inspired, and if anyone still thinks that we ought to keep "inspiration" as a technical word for the writers in Holy Scripture we ask him where he thinks their ideas came from, if not from the Source of all truth.

And what is true of the wise pagan is equally true of the good heathen, the good Mahommedan or the good heretic. In English religious history there is nothing more remarkable than our recent change of attitude towards non-Christian religions—just as there is no more remarkable religious movement than the missionary movement of the last century. We don't talk nowadays as if the heathen Hindu or the heathen Chineese were completely benighted creatures: we look reverently for the truth their religions have taught them, and we're even prepared to allow that the East as a whole has more instinct for religion than the West. Some people even go so far as to say that the English, like the Romans, have very little instinct for religion: but I think that's going too far, for

if we are a nation of rulers, or a nation of shopkeepers, it must never be forgotten that we are also a nation of poets.

But all this change of attitude doesn't mean that we think their religion is as good as ours, or that we've as much to learn from them as they have to learn from us. Come back to the question of conduct, and ask yourself or anyone else whether the Hindu religions, with all their beauty, have produced a standard of conduct which you think tolerable, and you'll be bound to admit they haven't. People will tell you that Christianity hasn't produced such marvellous results in England that we can afford to throw stones at India, but the simple fact is that the evil which happens here happens precisely because we're not true to the teaching of our religion, whereas a great deal—most, in fact—of the evil in India comes because they have been too true to the teaching of theirs. It's all very well to say that books like *Mother India* exaggerate; but no one has questioned the fact that very many of the horrors described in that book are directly due

to the teaching of religion, and whatever faults our archbishops and bishops have it's a long time since they've urged immorality on their flocks!

Mahommedanism is a very different affair: it *does* aim at producing conduct of a respectable kind, and does in a large measure succeed, but it does it at the price which respectability always has to pay, of denying the possibility of progress, and that's why no Mahommedan country, with one partial exception, has ever done anything to help the world on.

But these are too large questions to deal with so shortly: I only mention them here to illustrate my point that while no sensible Christian doubts that a good Hindu or a good Mahommedan will find favour with God, no sensible Christian *ought* to doubt that the conduct of either of them (which is what we began by talking about) would be infinitely better if he held a truer faith.

I said just now that Christ laid stress upon conduct: of course He did, but you mustn't forget that He never separated the duty of one man to another from their relationship to God. It was

just because He was so sure that God was His Father and theirs that He knew what their duty was, as clearly as He knew His own. It is simply humbug to talk as if you could separate Christ's theory from His practice: with Him the two were simply inseparable. And yet you will find a lot of people saying, "Oh, I *entirely* approve of Christ's moral teaching: very difficult of course, but so clearly right," and yet entirely denying the theory on which all that teaching was based. I suppose one can't say it's *impossible* that a man should live a perfect life on a completely false theory, but surely one can say that the odds are infinitely against it. All our experience goes to show that every little bit of true knowledge, in small things as in great, helps towards right action: if you get a life which the world agrees (as nearly as it's ever agreed about anything) in regarding as perfect, isn't it a monstrously large order to suggest that the theory or the knowledge behind that life is false? I don't say you can't love your neighbour as yourself without regarding him as the son, like yourself, of your Father which

is in heaven: I don't say that to regard him as such, or to say you regard him as such, will *make* you love him, but I do say that it is simply silly to suggest that it isn't *easier* for those who hold that belief—and after all, isn't that what most of our champions of “conduct” want?

III

MY DEAR MARY,—But, as you truly observe, what about the Church? As you haven't failed to remark, I've said nothing about it so far, except to hint that it hasn't by any means been as wise as it should have been: and you want to know whether it's worth bothering about it. Why not, says you, let everyone go on his (or her) own, and get to God their own way? Can't God be trusted to deal with us as individuals?

Well, I should begin by saying that the Church is not, and never has been, anything like what it was meant to be. It annoys me that some people with a high doctrine of the Church—which is what a High Churchman really is—seem to think it wrong to remember the mistakes

it has made. I should have thought that, the higher your expectations were, the greater would be your disappointment at the lamentable results—for lamentable is the best epithet for a great deal of Christian Church history. I don't call myself a "High Churchman," in fact I've a great dislike to calling myself anything except a Christian, but I can honestly say I believe the Church of England (which is the only one I know much about) is a better Church in point of zeal and honesty than it has ever been before.

That's not saying much?—well, that is for other people to decide: I should be the first to agree that it ought to be infinitely better, but I think it is a great mistake to undervalue the amount of unselfish good work which is being done in England in the name of Christ to-day. As someone very truly said, the best cure for pessimism is to study history, and if you compare the state of the Church of England with its condition a century ago, or two centuries ago, I don't think you'll feel as gloomy as you otherwise might.

But as for the reasons for having a Church

at all, they aren't really primarily religious but simply natural. No one has ever got anything done that was worth doing in this country, or in any other that I've heard of, except by banding together a lot of like-minded people. When Jim wanted to save that footpath the other day, how did he set about it? He got together a small party of people who were keen on the subject, and I think he told me the other day that when they'd succeeded they decided to keep up the organization, in case more things of that kind wanted doing.

Christ knew human nature, and that is why, with all His care for individuals, He took such tremendous pains to organize and train a little body who were to stick together and form the nucleus of the Church. He said very little about the Church as such, and I am bound to say that I can't help feeling He would have said more if its official status had been as central to His teaching as many better men than I believe: but that He meant His followers to hold together and form a definite society seems to me beyond

question. To found a ceremony of admission and to institute a common meal would be acts without meaning if Christians were not to be a body standing by themselves, and known so to stand. It was the only conceivable policy for the Founder of a religion, then as now.

And again it seems clear that there was also a definite moral purpose, though one which has dropped out of sight in much ecclesiastical history. To live and act with other people for a common cause means to cease to insist on your own private prejudices: St Paul's epistles are full of the need for the strong to sympathize with the weak, and the clever to remember the stupid: all working with other people is the best possible discipline of character. It is little short of a tragedy that words like "catholic" and "ecclesiastical," which ought to imply the utmost breadth of tolerance on all matters which are not essential, have come to be symbols for sharp exclusiveness and for a narrow insistence on the unimportant.

Here's the position, then: you have a society

going back, as we believe, to Our Lord's own foundation, and with a history of nearly two thousand years behind it: as you and I think, it has often made horrible mistakes, but if people wouldn't claim that the Church was infallible, or call it "her," I think any sane person would agree that it has been the greatest power for good that this country, or Europe, has seen: it contains many stupid and some wrong-headed people, and is sometimes controlled by them, but it contains also more unselfishness and more hard work for others than any other society I know. If people like you keep out of it because of the tiresome people you'll meet, it will find it harder and harder to keep to its main purpose, and be more and more likely to drift into unprofitable backwaters. What the Church wants isn't patronizing criticism or patronizing sympathy; it wants loyal help from all those who are wise enough and generous enough to sympathize with its great divine cause, and to forgive its (very human) failures.

And if you stay outside you must forgive me for saying that the Church will not be the only

loser. You will lose, as I've just been saying, that discipline which we all need and all dislike—not the discipline of hair-shirt and fastings, but the discipline which comes from sinking your own prejudices for a great end, and co-operating for that end with people whom you're intellectually entitled to despise. Don't imagine that I mean that Christians as such are intellectually negligible: I could reel off the names of a dozen modern bishops and deans whom anyone would admit to be men of first-rate ability: but the average intellectual level of every small Christian society will inevitably be lower than yours. It's very tempting to feel superior and to keep away, but to despise the weaker brethren is extremely un-Pauline, and (I needn't say) fundamentally un-Christian. No one denies that as good prayers can be said on lonely hills or quiet gardens as in any parish church or cathedral, but the fact remains that they're very seldom offered. There are very few people who can afford to neglect the help given by regular observances, or who can trust themselves to organize them privately.

It may seem, and does seem, a terribly far cry from your parish church to the ideal church of St Paul's dreams, or from your little congregation to the Christian brotherhood which Our Lord founded, but that's the way with all ideals. It's a good long way from heaven to a wild flower, or from the primrose to what Wordsworth saw in it, but the question for us is whether we believe enough in the ideal to be able to see it in the very prosaic reality, and for you the practical questions seem to be these:

- (1) Didn't Christ mean His followers to form a society?
- (2) Wasn't He obviously right?
- (3) Isn't my church, with all its faults, quite definitely an attempt to realize His idea?
- (4) Can I help in the attempt?
- (5) How?

There! If you will put those questions honestly to yourself you may have leave now and then to enjoy what Lord Balfour (I believe) called the only pleasure which never palls!

IV

MY DEAR MARY,—Oh, didn't you know? What Lord Balfour said (if it *was* Lord Balfour—anyhow it was a wise man) was that the only pleasure which never really palls is the pleasure of shirking going to church. I don't believe you really want me to explain that, but perhaps I'd better say something about it in case you misunderstand him (if it *was* him) or me.

People have such queer ideas about the reasons why they go to church: their reasons for going are often nearly as bad as their reasons for staying away—which is saying a good deal. I suppose the first reason for going is to remind ourselves of the side of our life which it is so amazingly easy to forget. I always think that King Henry built his chapel at Eton so splendidly large in order that we should have no excuse for forgetting—at any rate we can't possibly forget what *he* thought about it. I needn't dwell on that point, but now that most people have stopped having family prayers, or even saying

grace (not that that was ever very successful), it's all the more necessary to have something definite and regular to remind us that we are, or believe that we are, not merely brutes that perish. No doubt you can go to church without thinking at all, but, if you aren't going to think, it clearly can't matter much where you go or where you don't go!

That is what people mean by saying that our first duty in church is to praise God. I don't mean that He takes a childish delight in having *Te Deums* sung. Christ liked to hear the children singing as He rode into Jerusalem (with what thoughts in His heart!) because they meant, or thought they meant, what they said, and God must be glad that the creatures whom He made should remember that, and try to think why He made them. To go to church is like remembering to kiss your father when you come down to breakfast: to stay away is like forgetting to do so.

Oh no, you say, I did that when I said my prayers in the morning: perhaps you're right, and going to church is something a bit more exceptional. Your Father's birthday? Ought He

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to have so many in the year? Oh, well, don't let's argue about it: Sunday *is* God's day: we get it historically from Christianity (and aren't nearly grateful enough for it) and I think it's clear that He has a claim to some special recognition on that day. So let's go to church!

Or why not think of it like the weekly letter home to one's mother? No doubt it's primarily a duty, no doubt it's sometimes a tiresome one, though sometimes a delight. But, whatever it is, it does help one to keep in touch with one's home, and it reacts on ourselves in a way we know we welcome. Also it's very likely to produce an answering letter from her. So, I say again, let's go to church!

I don't want now to talk about the particular service you should go to: I will, later on, if you want me to: at the moment I'm only concerned to get you inside the building, and when you're there I hope you won't forget what I said the other day about being in fellowship with other people. They're all there, or ought to be, for the same reason that brings you, and it's perfectly

clear that you can all have, and all do have, a tremendous influence on one another, and if you make even the slightest effort to realize your unity you won't have come in vain.

It's very hard, you'll say, when they're singing a lot of hymns or psalms, and obviously not thinking what they sing. I don't agree; I never assist at even the most perfunctory performance of *God save the King* without feeling proud of being an Englishman. Of course most people aren't thinking what the words mean, but some of them are, and all of them have for the moment a feeling that they belong to a great society. It's like that in church: the idea's bigger, and perhaps fewer people in proportion feel it, but anyhow you can feel it for them, and just as a man obviously standing at attention helps other people to realize what the National Anthem means, so does a reverent churchgoer help others to get their thoughts on the right lines.

But there's an aspect of church-going which isn't nearly as much remembered as it ought to be, and that is what I may call the barrack-square

aspect. You don't go to church only to *do* something, but to learn how things should be done. If you, who haven't, I believe, a very military mind, have ever watched a Guards' sergeant drilling recruits, you'll have been disgusted at the futility of it, and at the prodigious importance attached to what is clearly unimportant. Very good: but ask any of your friends—not Guardsmen—who fought in the war whom they wished to have by their side or in support, and I shall be surprised if they don't give their vote to the Guards. And why? Just because they knew that the Guards by their traditions of drill were absolutely safe not to fail when they came into action: it simply didn't occur to them that they *could* break. There's a good poem of Kipling's on the subject in praise of the non-commissioned man. When the regiment goes into action under a hot fire:

“Of all 'is five years' schoolin' they don't
remember much
Excep' the not retreatin', the step an' keepin'
touch.”

But that is enough: they hold on, though all their natural instincts are telling them to bolt, until the great moment comes,

“ And ’e lifts ’em, lifts ’em, lifts ’em through the charge that wins the day.”

Can’t you see the analogy?—it isn’t in church that the Christian battles are fought and won, but outside in the world, but if the drill has been honestly undergone and wisely taught (which it isn’t always, by any means), the lessons learnt in church will bear fruit. Anyhow, I suggest that if you look at yourself and your brother (or sister) members of the congregation from that point of view, you’ll find yourselves a great deal more interesting and quite possibly inspiring.

It’s no good your saying that the services you go to don’t seem calculated to produce that result: if they don’t, you ought to think out what *would* produce it, and go and talk to your parson about it: the poor man will be only too thankful for some suggestions which will show that someone in the congregation is thinking

about it. Don't forget what an amazingly difficult job he's got: some of his people will be shocked at the mildest type of criticism applied to the Bible: some will be supercilious if he's too simple: he can't know what's wanted, unless some of you lay people will be kind enough to tell him. It's bad luck to blame him for the gap between the clergy and the laity, if you're making no effort to bridge it.

I've an idea or two of my own, but as I've never had a parish to run I suggest them with diffidence: but I do think they'd help. The first is that it's nonsense to keep reading out the Bible without ever explaining it. We pride ourselves on being a Protestant Church which reads its Bible, but a great deal of our reading is on a level with the Buddhists in Thibet who write their prayers on a bit of paper, put them on a little windmill, and count one every time it goes round! What is the good of reading Jewish history in snippets to people who don't know the difference between Israel and Judah?—or the prophets without explaining what they're driving

at? I don't think any lesson ought to be read without a minute's introduction, and I should like to see the archbishops authorize some introductions of the kind.

But I should go further, and say definitely that one of my Sunday sermons was going to be instructive: I'm sure one dose of exhortation a day is enough for any congregation, and too much for the average preacher. I should like to see him take the Bible and go through it, encouraging the people to bring their Bibles and verify what he says. Those who only wanted exhortation could go out first, but I think you'd find they'd stay. Any amount of our religious troubles arise from sheer ignorance, and it's not malicious ignorance but the result of lack of instruction.

And I don't know that the preacher need limit himself to the Bible: I don't see why his instructional addresses shouldn't deal with any practical subject he knows, provided he keeps clear of party politics. I'm sure the fetish of one type of sermon is worshipped too zealously.

What about the great men and women in history? Aren't their good deeds fit subjects for a Christian discourse? Don't we believe that all that was good in them came from God? Why not preach about the good men whose goodness didn't lead them to Christ, as well as those who came to Him? If they don't admire us, there's no reason why we shouldn't admire them, and show that we admire. I want a Christian congregation to feel that all beauty and truth and goodness is divine, and that it's their duty to add to them all in Christ's name. The more they feel that non-Christians have done, the more they ought to feel that *they* could do. If they loved truth like Darwin, and work like Pasteur, and honour like Lord Nelson, and nature like Wordsworth, and beauty like Turner, they'd soon make Christianity a living force, and claim the world for God.

But this, as you will no doubt remark, is a long way from the question why you should attend mattins at St James the Less, Hanford: I only hope you'll see the connection: I promise you it's there!

V

MY DEAR MARY,—Mahommedanism? I'm very far from being an expert, but if you want me to develop what I said, I will. As for the one exception to the rule that Mahommedanism means stagnation, I was thinking of the Moors in Spain, who clearly did advance human learning, and behaved at least as well as their Christian neighbours.

But the general rule is undeniable, and indeed inevitable. Mahomet prided himself on knowing human nature, and he decided, as most of us do, that the way to get people to do things is not to ask too much: so he asked a little and got it. Christ, who "knew what was in man," went on the opposite principle, and asked for everything: He hardly gave us any command except the command to be perfect. And what has He got? Not much, you will say: no, but He is getting more and more every century, whereas Mahomet is getting less and less.

The other thing Mahomet thought he knew

was that you must give definite orders—so much prayer, so much alms, so much fasting; Christ was continually refusing to lay down such rules, because He knew that as soon as you lay down a minimum it tends to become the maximum. When St Peter generously offered to forgive his brother seven times, Christ laughed at him and suggested four hundred and ninety as a good working number. When the Apostles asked, Are there few that be saved? they wanted a definition: they wanted to feel that they, at any rate, were on the safe side of the line—just what most of us would like to know to-day. Christ said, strive to enter in at the strait gate—or, in other words, you can never say you've done enough.

That is exactly what Mahomet encouraged his followers to feel: when they've kept his admirable rules they *have* done enough, and there is no conceivable reason in their religion for doing more. They've been saved the trouble of thinking, which is the one sort of trouble that no man can safely be saved. The orthodox Mahommedan *mayn't* think, and if you go to Cairo now you'll

find the trouble is that some of them want to. Any Mahommedan rising is always a rising against Liberalism, which makes it so funny that Mr Gladstone had always rather a feeling for them. It's just like what happened a hundred years ago in Spain: the Spanish rose, and all good Liberals in this country assumed it was against tyranny. They were rather bothered when they found the popular party were called Serviles, who only wanted to be allowed to obey their priests and not to be troubled to vote!

Please don't think I don't admire Mahommedanism: I do, and think there's a lot we could learn from it. For one thing, their reverence for God and their belief in Him put our casual manners and creeds to shame; for another, they have really made their religious society into a practical brotherhood, and they help and care for one another in a way which Christians in this country have long ceased to do. And they do act up to their religion in a way that most of us have never tried to achieve.

All this is admirable, and very impressive: they've got a discipline which we have lost, but the price is infinitely too high. They've consecrated the second-best, and when any people once do that they become a danger to the world, and an enemy to progress. We're all of us only too ready to acquiesce in the second-best, both in our own affairs and in public matters, and when religion supports it the tendency becomes almost irresistible. The simple fact is that Mahomet was about four hundred years ahead of his time: by an amazing force of personality he impressed his ideal on all his neighbours, and created a force that came near conquering the world. But just because he claimed to legislate in detail, and to set limits to progress, his followers are now a thousand years behind, and every year that passes adds to their handicap. I don't know whether to say of him that no good man ever did so much harm or that no bad man ever did so much good, but I'm not at all sure that both remarks aren't true.

The history of Christianity is precisely the

opposite: it starts with the highest possible ideals and after a bit gets stereotyped and settles down. I think Dante was right when he puts the blame on poor Constantine: anyhow, to fall into the organizing hands of Rome was a dangerous and a disastrous thing for the Church. For Rome was above all things an organizer: if the Church had stuck to the Greeks there might have been more heresies, but there wouldn't have been such schisms, for thinkers can tolerate disagreement, while administrators daren't. But even Rome, and Roman organization, couldn't kill the spirit of Christianity, because we have always had Christ to go back to, and it is perfectly clear that He laid down no limits to the moral conquests to be made in His name. That is why, even when the Church seems most dead, you suddenly get a man arising with a great new idea—like St Francis in one century, or William Wilberforce in another: both of them challenge existing ideas in the name of their Master, and as soon as the challenge is uttered many of their fellow-Christians feel it to be unanswerable. "Back to

Christ!" means progress; "back to Mahomet" means stagnation.

In the great university of Cairo you'll find thousands of students reading the Koran, and nothing but the Koran: four years at the text, I think it is, and four years at the commentary: from there they go out to preach the doctrine which threatened Europe a thousand years ago. It doesn't threaten Europe now, and if you ask yourself why, you'll see it's because we've got a belief in progress which, outside Christianity, there's very little to justify. But it does threaten Africa: because for the African pagan Mahomedanism is a big and simple step forward, just as it was for the people to whom it was first preached. The danger is that it's a step which can never be repeated: to leave the comfortable second-best (when that's guaranteed by religion as sufficient) is too much to ask of human nature. That's why we have at last come to see that it's no good teaching the African native anything unless it's based on Christianity: that's why the Colonial Office—thank heaven!—is not repeating

there the mistake we made in India of offering civilization without religion. The schools in Nigeria are in definitely Christian hands, with Government support. You can admire Mahomedans as much as you like—they make admirable allies and faithful subjects—but if you're taking a long view of the future of the world you can't but think their growth to be a danger.

It's a curious position, for in a way they represent the Old Testament stage which the Jews had to go through: it's much simpler for the uninstructed African to understand than Christianity, which is a tremendous leap from all they've thought or practised. It requires, I've no doubt, a great and wise man to preach the Gospel to the savage. But the Old Testament is a book of growth: it's always pointing forward, and as you read it in historical sequence you can see the old ideas being purified and widening and deepening: in Mahommedanism there is nothing of that: it's static, not dynamic, and "once a Mahommedan always a Mahommedan" is perilously near being true.

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The worst of it is that we're most of us Mahommedan at heart: we're always trying, like the Apostles in their weaker moments, as I have suggested, to tie Christianity down to rules and regulations and save ourselves the trouble of thought. Oh no, we aren't any better than they are, but, as I've been saying all along, the whole point of us, whether as human beings or as Christians, is that we know we ought to be better than we are (see Browning, *passim*), and some day, please God, we shall be!

VI

MY DEAR MARY,—About “rewards” in a future life I think there's one big mistake which people often make. If the world is run on reasonable lines at all, to do what is right must produce desirable consequences. If a man takes reasonable care of his body and doesn't eat or drink too much he is “rewarded” by better health, in other words, he can go on eating and drinking longer than he otherwise would. There's nothing very glorious in that, but any decent

person only wants to go on eating and drinking in order to make some profitable use of his life.

It's just the same with what is called the spiritual side of you: if there is any difference between right and wrong, as we all believe, then to do right is to be in harmony with the universe, if the universe has any moral meaning at all, and to be in harmony with your environment is the way to happiness. Most of us make the mistake of playing up to our *immediate* environment and trying to fit in with that, but that's clearly a short-sighted plan, and ultimate happiness comes from being in harmony with what's ultimately true. It doesn't follow that you do right in order to be happy: the point is that you can't help being happy if you're doing what you're meant to do. You're "fulfilling your function" (to use some more scientific jargon), and fulfilling functions means happiness as much as drinking when you're thirsty or eating when you're hungry. There's a profound truth in Stevenson's lines:

“Now at last the sun is going down behind the wood,

And oh I am so happy for I know that I’ve been good!”

But happiness is a much-abused word. It’s all very well to talk of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but you’ve got to remember that it can’t be measured in quantity only: some happinesses are worth a great deal more than others. I remember a story of an Oxford don who was trying to make this point and said, “If I had £1 to spend, should I spend it on buying books on philosophy or a dozen bottles of champagne?” and an undergraduate voice was heard imploring him to stick to the philosophy—but the point is a true one all the same. Whether you can explain it or not, the pleasure got from listening to a great tragedy is worth more than the pleasure got from listening to a good farce (and you might well ask Jim to try to tell you why).

But that is by the way: you can’t help being happy in heaven, whether you want to or not,

and you needn't be afraid that that means your only motive is happiness, any more than the successful athlete is necessarily thinking about the cup he may win, or a successful politician necessarily thinking about the salary he may get as a Cabinet Minister. Some politicians do, but in this country, at least, thank heaven! most of them don't. No doubt an indefinite amount of harm is done by the hymn about getting repaid a thousandfold for anything we give. It's right for us to keep as clear as we can from any suspicion of bribery, and if things like choir treats really make so much difference they ought to be given up, but even we must give ourselves the pleasure now and then of rewarding people to whom we're grateful, and as God's motives are obviously above suspicion we needn't object to His doing so. The real trouble is that so many people *are* fundamentally suspicious about God: that's why the first and most important thing is to get right ideas about Him, as I've said before.

Our whole belief in a future life at all really

depends upon that—upon our holding the view of God which Christ held. If He was right, there's no doubt that God sees an infinite value in the individual soul: Christ exhausted the possibilities of language to make that clear: and I can't believe that this world as we see it is enough to give that value fair play. Personality seems to me such a tremendous thing—the foundation of all intelligent life—that it is worth preserving, and that is why no mere absorption into God, or melting down again such as others have thought of, satisfies me. I don't think Christ's conception can be fulfilled by anything short of God's revealing Himself to the individual, and that is ultimately what heaven means.

No doubt the vision is infinitely beyond the capacity of anyone on earth: you can see a hint of this in *The Dream of Gerontius*, or in Browning's *Easter Day*: that's why, when you say "the Romish doctrine of purgatory is a fond thing vainly invented," I don't think it's dishonest to put the emphasis on *Romish*. The Romish doctrine at the time was, I have little doubt, extremely

mechanical, as it still is in practice in many parts of Europe, but there is, not a doctrine but, a theory of purgatory which is perfectly legitimate. It's only a concession to our inability to think except in terms of space and time, but as long as you remember that, there's no harm in your dreaming dreams or seeing visions (if you can) of an intermediate state.

All attempts to picture heaven are obviously doomed to failure: if they hadn't been, Our Lord would have given us some. St John tried his hand in the Revelation, but the Jews weren't pictorially minded, and, great as his poetry is, it may have done more harm than good with prosaic people who insist on taking him literally. It's a dangerous thing to try metaphors on the religious public: look at poor Jonah and the whale! And countless people like Kipling's sailors are inclined to cry:

“Must we sing for evermore
On this windless glassy floor?
Take back your golden fiddles, and we'll beat
to open sea!”

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St Paul was wiser, and when he invented the great phrase "a spiritual body" he went as far as language could go, and settled the question once for all. "The resurrection of the body" seems to me to safeguard identity and "recognizability" (if there is such a word), and those are the things we really care about. I don't underrate the discoveries of the Society of Psychical Research, and it would be silly not to recognize that its leading members have been, and are, men of first-rate intellect, but its discoveries seem to me at present to raise at least as many questions as they settle. For my own part I'm content to say, in the words of that great Nonconformist saint, Richard Baxter:

" My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim:
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all
And I shall be with Him."

But shall we be happy then? Surely to be happy with Him implies at least an effort to be like Him in character, and He told and showed us what that character must be. We hope that

we shall become like Him when we see Him as He is, but that implies that while we walk by faith and not by sight we have the desire and the hope and the will to make ourselves worthy of His presence.

EXTRACT FROM MRS MADDISON'S LETTER

1. *About creeds. Supposing Jim shook off his disbelief, which, as you must know all the time, is purely superficial, do you want him to accept the Thirty-nine Articles, and the Athanasian Creed? If so, what does the Athanasian Creed mean? If not, what is its value? Neither seem satisfying. They seem remote from reality. What should be one's conception of God? I know, of course, that one can't have a mental image. But what can one have? Ought one only to think of the Holy Spirit? If so, how ought one to think of it? Are we to accept all the metaphysical statements in the Athanasian Creed? And then it does condemn people to everlasting punishment if they don't accept them. But that's not true. How does one grasp Christ's conception of God, which must be what we're meant to grasp?*

2. *About prayer. It seems to be difficult in this way. The first thing about prayer one is told when one begins to understand things is that one mustn't pray for what one wants. Then what is one meant to pray for, or is prayer meant to be praise? I do see that the Lord's Prayer is a marvellous prayer, partly because it is an unselfish one, and partly because it is reverent in the real sense of the word. But if, for instance, one prays to be made better, one doesn't want to feel one is trying to shift the responsibility, which after all rests with oneself. And I do agree with some of the prayers in church, and love the sound of them. But, for instance, a little thing like praying for fine weather must really be wrong; in view of what we know about weather now, one might just as well pray for the skies to fall. One can thank God for all the "innumerable benefits." But then one does that semi-consciously all day. I cannot get into the right frame of mind to pray regularly, which I know is what one should be able to do. I do feel bursts of thanksgiving, but then I feel unhappy and ungrateful because I don't always have them. How does one get into the way of it, provided that one tries to?*

3. *About the relations between the Church and State. They appear to have no connection to speak of at the present day in England, or not very much. The State seems to have all the power. England, for instance, seems to have grown out of any unity between the two. Surely there ought to be more interdependence? Is it because the Church is at a low ebb just now—but then you say it isn't. In the Middle Ages the Church definitely took part both in affairs of State and in general national affairs, like, for instance, founding Oxford and Cambridge. But now it only seems concerned with the individual and not with the nation as a whole. Of course the Church can't actually be mixed up in political discussions. But the general principles which the Church teaches ought to have an enormous influence, much more than they have against, for instance, Communism, and wars and strikes and everything national. Couldn't there be more co-operation between the two?*

4. *Self-denial in Lent. Please explain this a little and what good it does. So many people whom I consider really good don't do it. And anything one does or could do seems so immeasurably futile. I mean*

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giving up any kind of food surely means so inconceivably little that it becomes a farce. Giving up amusements is better, but even that is rather a farce. Is it to remind one that it is Lent? But then one shouldn't need reminding.

VII

MY DEAR MARY,—I thought we should get to the Athanasian Creed before long! You can't say you're often asked to repeat it in practice, but as long as it stands where it does in the Prayer Book, with the rubric telling us to use it on the great festivals, you certainly have the best possible right to ask what we mean by it, and why we don't use it as we're told to do. (Incidentally that's one of the things which would have been corrected in the new Prayer Book, and very few of its opponents would enjoy having the rubric literally obeyed!)

But it's a very interesting and, I think, a very profitable subject if you've got time to have it explained: unexplained, it quite clearly conveys definitely false impressions and does far more

harm than good to an uninstructed congregation. So let me try to explain!

Let us admit first of all that human language is entirely inadequate to express the mysteries of the Godhead, and the worst of it is that words have a tiresome way of changing their meaning which perplexes the uneducated. For instance, it seems nonsense to the ordinary man to suggest that the "persons" of the Trinity are not separate, but can be distinguished. That's because the word "person," as used by those who first made our creeds, did not contain the meaning of individuality—I mean of persons cut off from one another, as you and I are cut off. It's a great nuisance, and very confusing to the beginner, but there it is!

Now for the Creed itself: to begin with, I should like to say that the two things for which it's usually attacked are really hardly fair: people say first that it insists on attempting to define the undefinable, and secondly that it says we shall be damned for failure to believe in doctrines we can't understand.

Let's take the second point first. I quite agree that it does emphasize brutally the importance of right belief, but there is one small and one large qualification to be made. It begins, or should begin, Whosoever wishes to be *salvus*. I'm not quite sure what *salvus* means, but I'm sure it doesn't mean "saved" in the sense that no one else *can* be: I think it means "safe and sound"—"safe" in the sense that he has got the truth, and "sound" in the sense that he adds to it or subtracts from it at his peril. While he sticks to this he's on safe ground, and remember that the creed or hymn (for it's really more of a hymn like the *Te Deum* than a creed) was written for professing Christians, not for the world at large.

But the more important qualification lies in the last verse but one, where it says in so many words that it's *doing* good and *doing* evil, not believing right or wrong, which settles your everlasting destiny. I dare say this sounds, or is, inconsistent with what it's said elsewhere, but surely creeds, like people, have a right to be

judged at their best, and that verse seems to me to make it clear that the author (who wasn't St Athanasius) meant only to say that the right belief is a tremendous help, and that to play tricks with it lightly is a tremendous responsibility, but that in the end it was the way you lived your life which matters. Anyhow it does say what no other "creed" says, and ought to be given more credit than it gets.

Now as for the first objection: that's even more unfair. I should have said that the whole hymn from beginning to end is a series of *refusals* to explain or define. To explain mysteries and define the undefinable is precisely what all heretics have always been trying to do. They're called "heretics" because they "choose" a little bit of the truth and then insist that it's the whole. It's quite true, as I said the other day, to call Christ the Son of God, if you realize that you're talking in metaphor: what the heretics did was to say: "We all know what sons are, and one of the things we know is that no son is as old as his father, therefore . . ." Now don't

you see what difficulties common sense gets them into?

The Church kept on saying: "We don't know; we won't explain, because we can't: we haven't got the knowledge and we haven't got the language, so we'll keep on saying what we believe to be true, even though we don't understand it." The Church goes back to what Christ said: He seems to have spoken as if He and the Father and the Spirit were *in a sense* one and *in a sense* different: what the exact sense was we don't know, but we believe that He was right. So this hymn takes the best language it can find—the language of "persons"—and keeps on hammering away and saying three persons, one God—one and yet three—three and yet one. You can say anything you like about that: you can call it bad philosophy—and I quite agree that it's not the language anyone would use nowadays—but the one thing you mustn't in fairness say is that it's an *explanation*. It's a definite refusal to explain the mystery of the nature of God.

And it's just the same with the other great

Christian mystery, the Incarnation. The heretics were ready with all sorts of quite sensible explanations: Christ was God after his Baptism, or till the Crucifixion; or He wasn't exactly God at all, but an appearance; or he wasn't really man, but a divine phantom. The poor old Church kept on stupidly saying: "We can't explain: we haven't the knowledge and we haven't the language, but we do believe He was both God and Man, and perhaps some day we shall understand how." The nearest it gets to an explanation is to give the statement that "as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ," and if you call that an *explanation* you're much more easily satisfied than I expect!

No, whatever else the hymn does or doesn't do, it doesn't explain: it persistently refuses, unlike the heretics, to pin its faith to any particular explanation of the mystery of the Incarnation.

That's why I think the usual attacks on it are based on wrong grounds, but I quite agree that it lays itself open to attack. It was written just after the Church had survived some very serious

attacks by heretics, which would have been intellectually disastrous if they'd succeeded, and they wanted to throw up their hats and shout. So they wrote their hymn, and they marched round their churches singing (in effect), "We won't explain; we won't define: we can't explain; we can't define; and we aren't ashamed to say so!" And if they added, as they did, some very uncharitable sentiments about the enemies they had defeated, and if they weren't as enlightened as we are about the virtuous heathen, well, I'm not surprised, and I like the hymn all the better as an historical document.

But that's very far from saying that I want it sung in church on Christmas Day and all the great days when uninstructed people come to church: it's an ideally bad hymn for the uninstructed. We might learn a lesson from the Romans there: in their services I believe it's only sung at prime—that is to say, at 6 A.M.—and I think it's not unreasonable to suppose that people who get up to go to church at 6 A.M. are likely to be people whose faith is pretty secure

and based on a certain amount of knowledge. It wasn't till the Reformation that it got the place it holds, and, much as I admire the Reformation, it's quite clear that to put it in its present place was one of the Reformers' many serious mistakes.

But nowadays it's defended (I gather) by the other side, and we're told that to banish it from its present position would be to imply that we are abandoning Catholicity. That seems to me quite unhistorical and quite silly. I'll sing it, or say it, as often as you like, provided that I'm given a chance of explaining its history and its meaning; but I won't be a party to imposing it on the uninstructed; and I can't suppose that any congregation would bear to have me expounding it twenty times a year for the benefit of any stranger who might have come in—it's even doubtful, I fear, whether one exposition of it may not have been more than enough for you!

VIII

MY DEAR MARY,—The question you ask about the Thirty-nine Articles is easier to answer

than any other you've put so far! So far from wanting Jim to accept the Thirty-nine Articles I devoutly hope he'll never read them: I wish they weren't in the Prayer Book, and he'd much better hurry on to the Table of Kindred and Affinity!

But, if you'll promise not to talk to him about them, I should like to try to explain both why they are where they are, and why I wish they weren't. Like the Athanasian Creed, they can't be fairly judged without more historical knowledge than the average person has time to acquire. But, as they're about a thousand years younger, the facts are easier to ascertain.

As you probably know, the Reformation in this country was a very insular affair. I don't mean that it was all done to please Henry VIII., which is a silly sneer made only by people who know no history: it had been coming for centuries, but when it came it was very much influenced by the English desire not to have their affairs settled for them by foreigners. Do you remember what Cloten says in *Cymbeline*?—

“Britain is
A world by itself, and we will nothing pay
For wearing our own noses.”

Well, in the sixteenth century we had to choose, roughly speaking, between Catholicism—which meant Spain—and Protestantism—which meant Holland or Geneva—and we didn’t really want to choose either: if we *had* to choose, it must be the second, for Spain meant subjection to a foreign Power and surrender of the religious liberties we had won, but we didn’t at all like the alternative.

The Thirty-nine Articles really represent the minimum we could concede to the Continental Reformers to secure their support: we gave far less than they wanted, and we fought over every inch of our concessions. If you want to know what they really meant to the people who signed them first, you ought to consider what they refused to sign, and then you’ll see how carefully they chose their phrases. They were adopted as the basis of the somewhat prosaic agreement

between Church and State, and as such they appear in the Prayer Book.

Newman, as you probably know, claimed to be able to drive a coach-and-pair through any of them, and I'm inclined to think he was right: there was a very natural outcry when he published the tract in which he did so, but you must always remember that they are a legal document, and that is the justification for treating them as such. The essence of a legal document is to say exactly what it means, and its omissions or its ambiguities are perfectly fair game. I remember when I was at Cuddesdon studying them from that point of view with the best commentary I could get, and coming to the conclusion that from that point of view they could all be justified, with the possible exception of the one about the marriage of the clergy!

But, as you will truly observe, that is not a very dignified position, and I wish with all my heart that the Church would insist on their being revised: no State has a right to bind its partner to the terms of a document whose history is so

ambiguous, and no Church ought to consent to being bound by a document much of which it has to explain away. The difficulty, of course, is to find a form of restatement which would be acceptable to both sides, but I think it is so urgent that it ought to be attempted at all costs, for if a Church gives reason for people to think it insincere its usefulness is cramped from the start.

Hitherto we've adopted a characteristically British compromise: we print the Articles in the Prayer Book, but we don't ask anyone to say they believe them. Even the clergy, who used to be bound to sign them, are now only commanded to "assent" to them, and what "assent" means it would, I fancy, puzzle a lawyer to explain: anyhow, the alteration was clearly made in 1865 with the precise object of making it clear that detailed agreement with each sentence and clause of the Articles was no longer required. They contain a great deal which is obviously true and of the essence of a reformed church, but it is bound up with other things which are

quite alien not only from modern thought but from any sane interpretation of Christianity.

I can't help thinking that in this matter we're too much afraid of extreme Protestant outcry: surely it must be possible to say quite definitely that we reject the Papal claims, which is what they really care about, without appearing to tie ourselves to a doctrine of Predestination which most of them have ceased to hold and none of them would express in the language of the Thirty-nine Articles!

But, as I said before, don't encourage Jim to go into the question: he'll see in it an instance of clerical prevarication and begin to talk about Jesuits, and I can't deny that I think he'll have some excuse, though, as I've tried to show, there is an historical explanation which isn't entirely discreditable. It's very easy to be hard on ordinary people who lived in extraordinary times, and, speaking as an historian, I'm much more inclined to be grateful to the original English signatories of the Articles, and to Queen Elizabeth (not that she was an ordinary person!),

for saving us as much as they did save of the Catholic tradition. I get very angry with the people who think it clever to call Cranmer a time-server and a coward: after all, he *was* burnt at the stake for what he thought was true, which was more than most of us would go through; and if the Reformation was not all that it might have been, a great deal more than half the blame belongs to those who first of all made reformation necessary, and then passionately opposed any reform at all. I don't at all mind calling myself a Protestant, provided I'm allowed to call myself a Catholic too, for I think the main things we protested about were really Catholic things, such as the rights of peoples to hear the service in their own native tongues, and to read the Bible for themselves, and the right to criticize, in the name of Christ, the monstrous edifice of priestly and papal domination which had been built up in Europe.

But all the same I wish they weren't in the Prayer Book, and I hope to see a less controversial and a more Christian statement there before I die!

IX

MY DEAR MARY,—I remember years ago hearing someone tell a horrible story about the guide-post on the Dover road: it had stood there for years telling people how to get to Dover, but it had never been a yard on the road itself. I feel rather like that when you ask me to hold forth about prayer, for, though I know a good deal about it in theory, I know shamefully little about it in practice. Still I suppose guide-posts have their humble uses, so here goes!

To begin with, I suppose that all prayer means getting or keeping in touch with God—like writing letters home, as I always say to Confirmation candidates. I'm sure the first thing to hold on to is the Fatherhood of God, and that seems to me the one metaphor which you can hardly press too far. You remember that story I told you of St Anselm and the little boy who'd forgotten how to say his prayers and only remembered the words *Pater noster*?

I think we must start from there, and you see

at once how silly it is to talk as if prayer was mainly or primarily a matter of petition. I don't think the Greek word suggests it: the Latin word does, but then it's a theory of mine that the Romans did little but harm to the Christian religion. Anyhow it's quite clear that if a child's conversation with its father was mainly devoted to getting things out of him it would be a poor sort of child: of course it will ask for things, but that won't be its first idea.

What ought its first idea to be? It ought to want to understand its father, and, as far as it can, to sympathize with and share in the things that he cares about. That's why the Lord's Prayer, which, as you say, is an unselfish prayer, begins with sentences about Our Father's name and His kingdom and His will. They all, I think, mean the same thing from different points of view, and if we take a little trouble to think what God's will is we shall soon find it easy to sympathize. It's a terrible thing that we've got into the habit of saying, "Thy will be done" on all unhappy occasions, for, though Our Lord

certainly used it once in that sense, no one can doubt that the will of God meant to Him all that was good and happy. To try to do it is, as old William Law used to say, "The best and happiest thing in the world," and if a tradesman tries it, "it will make him a saint in his shop."

That's the first and, I think, the biggest thing about prayer, and it can't be emphasized too much before one goes on to the question of petition. But of course petition must come in, and there I should distinguish between two kinds of petition, the asking for oneself and the asking for other people. The latter gets much too small a share, and yet it's obviously the better. So many people get bored with their prayers for the very good reason that they're all about themselves, and they never realize that if they prayed more about other people they'd enjoy it twice as much. This sort of prayer wants organizing, for though it's all very well to say, as a friend of mine used to say, "God bless Europe, Asia, Africa *and* America" (he was an American), it's a little lacking in precision! There's a great

deal to be said for dividing up the people for whom one wishes to pray on to different days: it really is quite interesting to say, "Let me see, it's Thursday: whose turn is it to-day?"

I don't know how detailed such prayers ought to be: one doesn't know enough about many people to have more than a general wish to help, but I think that's quite worth having. One offers one's prayers to God for Him to use for their benefit if He will, and if you say "What good can it possibly do?", I don't think it's any more surprising that He should use your prayers to help other people than that He should use your words or your actions for that purpose, as He obviously does. And, besides that, I'm not prepared to set limits to the power of intercessory prayer: we've given up believing that we are all in watertight compartments, and realize that we can get inside one another in ways we don't in the least understand. In any case it's perfectly clear that nothing so helps us to behave rightly to people as praying for them, and there's nothing unduly mysterious about that. For

praying for people means trying to see them as God sees them, and that's the one key to right behaviour.

When you come on to petitions for oneself you have again to make a distinction, for praying for *things* is quite different from praying for *qualities*. When we pray for things, even such things as seem most obviously desirable, we know all the time that we aren't perfectly sure about it. The child has definite wishes, but it knows, or ought to know, that its father knows best. So I think that kind of prayer comes to being "I do want this: I want it very much: please let me have it, but if I can't, please don't let me be sulky." If you put it in that way, the prayer for things passes into the prayer for qualities, a much safer kind of prayer, for after all you don't want to have the thing if it's going to make you conceited—at least, if you do, you clearly can't ask God for it.

But I think the prayer for things is clearly right, and the more things you ask for the better: for clearly you are interested in things, and if

you leave them out of your prayers, your prayers will deal only with the things you ought to want, and not with the things you do want. It's a very dangerous thing to divide your life in two, and it's what we're always trying to do. If God is interested in us at all, He's interested in us all the time, not only when we're at our best and most pious. As Father Kelly used to say, it's a great danger to think that God's interest in a game of football is limited to a boy's playing a clean game: He's concerned also with his playing an effective game, and pious boys need greatly to be reminded of the fact, as they're liable to be horribly slack at such things.

When you come to asking for qualities you seem to be on safe ground. There can't be any doubt that God wants us to have as much courage and honesty and charity, and so on, as we can hold. That's quite true, but here the difficulty is that we never think how He is going to give them to us. We don't expect them to be pumped into us in the night, but we don't realize that we may be asked to pay for them or to

work for them. How in the world can we be made brave unless we're given dangers to face? but if a man asks for courage and meets a lion next day, he's not at all likely to realize it comes in answer to his prayer.

If you want to conquer a temptation you aren't really asking to be freed from it: you're asking for power to resist it, but you can't resist it if it never comes. Yet I've known a lot of people who repined because their temptations got no less in spite of prayer. I've never been quite clear about the petition, "Lead us not into temptation," unless it means temptation too hard for us, as I suppose it does. Anyhow, Saint James was bold enough to say that we were to count it all joy when we fall into temptation, and that seems a very sound doctrine. For every danger of failing is a chance of victory, and what we are really asking for, or ought to be, is the chance of winning a victory in Our Father's name. I like the story of Luther's throwing the inkpot at the devil when he came to visit him in the castle in Saxony: that seems a very proper attitude, for the

devil had no right to come in without knocking, and doesn't, in fact, come in unless we open the door.

As for the particular points you raise, I shouldn't bother about "shifting the responsibility" on to God: after all, it *is* His responsibility as well as ours, and there's not the least reason for supposing that He wants to shirk it. I agree about prayers for fine weather, except in so far as they mean a recognition that we're in God's hands: a harvest thanksgiving expresses the same idea from the other end. I'm glad you say that about thanksgiving, and the more "consciously" you can feel it the better. There's a verse of Bishop Heber which comes into my head now and then when I see the world looking its best:

"O God, O Good beyond compare,
 If thus Thy meaner works are fair,
 If thus Thy bounty gilds the span
 Of ruined earth and sinful man,
 How glorious must that mansion be
 Where Thy redeemed shall dwell with Thee!"

Well, you see I've said a lot, but there's a great deal more which I have no right to say. The

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people who really know how to pray to God and to praise Him, like Bishop Andrewes and Saint Francis—to take only two instances—are the people to tell you more, but as long as it's quite clear, as it is, that Christ was never tired of praying, and never ceased to bid His followers to pray, we've got to go on trying, and we may one day learn to do it a bit better.

X

MY DEAR MARY,—As to Church and State, of course I agree that the present situation is anomalous and absurd: it's impossible to defend it logically, and those who want frankly to sever the connection have most of the obvious arguments on their side. If I don't myself agree with them, it is because, theoretically, I've got a profound belief in the English power of making illogical arrangements work well, and practically, because, so far as my judgment goes, the country and the Church would both lose by disestablishment. The ideal arrangement, I suppose, would be what they've *theoretically* arrived at in Italy:

the Government has all the power, but its alliance with the Pope ought to be a guarantee that it will do nothing against Christian principles, and everything it reasonably can to forward them. I'm not sure if you like Mussolini—I'm sure Jim doesn't—and it's open to anyone to say that it won't work, but if you could imagine that kind of relationship existing in this country, with a Prime Minister and an Archbishop whom everyone could trust, it would, as I say, be something like the ideal.

But I'm sure, like you, that I don't want the Church in politics: it has never in history been able to resist the temptation of abusing any political power it's had, and that leads to an inevitable reaction—Laud began it with the best intentions: the Commonwealth paid him back in his own coin: the Church of the Restoration handed the grievance back with interest, and so you come to the lamentable history of the eighteenth century, and our "unhappy divisions" of the present day.

So I'm sure I don't want any direct political

power for the Church. When Christ said, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," people often forget that He was reserving for God all the things that really matter: the State can make you do a lot of things, but nothing that you think wrong, if you're prepared to suffer for it—in other words, *you* and your conscience are left completely free. And there's the field in which the Church ought to work. Its business is to keep the public conscience awake, and to keep hammering away at a national duty until people care enough to see that it is done. No doubt duties will conflict, and it's not the Church's official duty to say which comes first: if one party, for instance, seems to it to have a sound policy about drink, and another about housing, the individual Christian voter, and not the Archbishops or the National Assembly, ought to settle which comes first, but he ought to be told officially what are the things in national life which the Church thinks important.

At present individual Christian leaders have a good deal of weight, but we haven't any

organized Christian opinion, such as Copec tried to create: the worst of Copec seems to me to be that it involves such a lot of committee meetings and reports, which the average person won't make the time for. I should like to see the bishops take the lead: what's the good of being Episcopalian if we aren't to get some leadership? If they all agreed on a policy on any given social topic, and got the Assembly to agree too, I can't believe that, if they stuck to it, there wouldn't be a response in, say, twenty years. The difficulty, of course, is that all social questions are so complicated that no one can lay down a definite policy about things like drink or housing and be sure that he's right: but if it was repeatedly said on the highest authority that existing conditions are intolerable, on Christian principles at any rate, people would know that the Church stood for something real. As it is, you can't blame people for thinking that "Church questions" are pre-eminently things like the Prayer Book or disestablishment, which are very interesting but obviously not vital.

I suppose I ought to say a word about the Prayer Book. The main point that struck me was that most of the people voting were so extraordinarily hazy about present conditions that their opinion as to the best remedy was not worth much. Wasn't it John Simon who said how nice it was to feel you could go into any church nowadays and be sure you'd find the same sort of service? I wish two friends of Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic persuasions could have been persuaded to prosecute one another in a friendly manner for their respective illegalities: I should have liked to hear the Lord Chancellor (if it got to him) regretfully admonishing them both! What is quite certain is that even *he* couldn't, without incurring ridicule, compel the clergy to abide by the existing law. All the minor alterations suggested seem to me unquestionably on the right lines: I resent bitterly not being able to get away from the narrow views imposed on us in all the occasional services—such as Baptism, Marriage and Burial. Read the service for the Churching of Women—

which I know you've attended—and observe the absence of all allusion to the baby! I'm not anxious about the Communion Service: personally I prefer the new one, and the fuss about its doctrinal changes seems to me uncalled for. As for Reservation—the real *crux*—it's quite clear that the bishops must legislate, and the only effect of refusing to let them do so legally has been to make them do it on their own authority. But I won't go on about that unless you want me to.

The Prayer Book business illustrated the anomalies of our present system: I think Parliament was completely within its rights, but I think it made a foolish use of them. If the Church had been united in its demand it would have been so serious a snub that the partnership might have had to be broken, but, in view of all the Protestant propaganda, an M.P. was quite justified in saying he didn't think it was, and I shouldn't myself wish to break the connection on that ground.

The weakness of our political position is closely

connected with what is really our strength: we do aim at uniting in a real fellowship people who admittedly differ greatly on all sorts of important points, and the unity we get, though I think it's very real, isn't close enough to be politically effective. For my own part, I distrust too narrow a unity, and think we're trying for a bigger thing. The Church of Rome presents a very impressive spectacle to the outside world, but I think it's achieved at a prohibitive expense, and I very much doubt if it is so real a unity within as it appears from outside: I think external conformity covers a great deal of permitted diversity of thought and belief and practice.

Anyhow, that's not the unity I care about. I'm glad that we have in the Church of England people who differ completely in their views of the Sacrament, because I think the "high" and the "low" views are both honestly tenable by good Christian men. I'm glad to think that there have been two great missionary societies representing both schools of thought, and I know that when they get on to the mission field these

differences tend to disappear. It wouldn't shock me, but the reverse, to hear of a church which had High Mass in the morning and an evening Communion the same day. I should be sorry if all the clergy gave up white ties and took to dog-collars, and so on, and so on.

It's perfectly true that our divisions on matters of detail and doctrine lead to a lot of wasted energy, and (what is much worse) to a lot of uncharitable wrangling, and it's obvious that they involve that "political" weakness which you very rightly dislike, but I believe that the price is worth paying. There's only one maxim for a church, and that is one laid down by an old Father years ago: in necessary things unity, in doubtful things liberty, in all things charity. The Church of England no doubt makes mistakes about what is necessary: no doubt its liberty often looks like licence, and sometimes is: no doubt it's not got as much charity as it ought to have. But these (as I understand it) are the principles on which it tries to work, and I hope they always will be.

XI

MY DEAR MARY,—I can't help feeling that in what I said about the Church I may have seemed a little "superior": I mean it's a very cheap thing to talk about its mistakes and to forget all the good it's done. I do want you to feel that it has been, and is, doing an amazing amount for the world, and that it's a society we ought to feel proud to belong to. If I've seemed critical, it's because its champions so often seem to me to be basing its claims on the wrong grounds, and to be thinking it necessary to defend the indefensible. As I've hinted before, its real glory is that it has kept an ideal alive, and that even when its official character was lowest there were never lacking great people to recall it to its original purpose.

After all, if we want to judge England, we think of great Englishmen: most of us are as far from being poets as we are from being great generals or statesmen, but we've a right to be proud of Shakespeare and Shelley and Marlborough

and Cromwell. Just in the same way, the lives of great Christians in all the centuries are an inspiration and a glory in which we can claim a share. I don't despise Christianity because mediæval popes were scoundrels, any more than I despise English politics because they've had their extremely shady periods. When Christian leaders behaved in an un-Christian way we oughtn't to hesitate to condemn them; there are some people who are shocked at hearing that Fathers of the Church were savagely intolerant, just as some were shocked when Scott Holland described Jehu as "the bloodiest old ruffian in history," but in both cases they are wrong, and the evidence of one great saint outweighs the evidence of twenty great sinners.

But it isn't only the great saints who matter, and I'm not even sure that they're the people who matter most. When I want to feel proud of the Church, I think of the multitude which no one *can* number, of people who've lived and died in the attempt to prove in their own person that the Gospel of Christ is true. That phrase

comes from Bishop King of Lincoln, who certainly proved it to anyone who knew him. I remember old Stead, the militant Nonconformist, saying of him to me, with a complete change in his voice, "Ah, King, of course he was a saint!"

And there have been, and are, countless people making that attempt in every Christian century and every Christian country. I think I should like to see a special festival in their honour organized on St Matthias' Day. Matthias is the typical obscure Christian. We only know that he'd been with Our Lord, and was elected by lot to fill Judas' place. After that he relapses into complete obscurity: some people say he preached to cannibal Ethiopians, but I much prefer the other story, which is that he lived and died in Jerusalem, preaching to his own people, never getting any particular credit, and never winning any particular success. Isn't he the obvious patron saint of all the laborious parsons in town or country, who've never had anyone to tell them how well they preached, and have never seen any obvious result of their labours?

But just consider what people like that have accomplished. Take India, for example, and ask yourself how many names you can give of Christian missionaries in that vast country: and then ask yourself how it comes about that the name of Christ is honoured from one end of it to the other: I think the only answer is, "Strong is Truth, and shall prevail," and Truth has been shown in the unselfish and devoted lives of countless men and women who've gone there in the last century, and tried to live as Christ would have wished them to live.

In the last century, mind you, for it's little more than a hundred years since that amazing man, William Carey, set foot in India, in days when missionaries were refused a licence by the East India Company. Do you know about Carey?—how he started life as an agricultural labourer, taught himself Latin, Greek, French and Italian; kept himself as a cobbler with a young family: produced an account of the religious state of the whole world: persuaded the Baptists with whom he worked that missions were desirable, and founded

a missionary society with an income of £13, 2s. 6d.? Do you know how he offered himself as their first missionary, and was refused a licence by the Company, got shipped out on a Danish boat, and had to have his assistants smuggled out to him as indigo planters?—how he stood up to the great little Lord Wellesley and made him believe it was a good thing for an English Governor-General to proclaim his Christianity?

It's a thrilling story, and I really think that Carey was one of the two or three greatest Englishmen of the eighteenth century. Why don't we all hear a lot more about him? Have you ever heard him mentioned from the pulpit? He might well be mentioned this year, for there's an interesting centenary in which he bears a part. One Sunday, in 1829, a messenger from the Governor-General came to ask him to do a bit of translation work. Carey, of course, was a strict Sabbatarian, but when he saw what the job was he said his rules must go by the board for once. So he set to work on Sunday, and translated the order abolishing *suttee*, the first quite definite

application of Christian principles in the government of India, which he and his friends had been urging ever since they came.

It's a thrilling story, but it is still more thrilling to reflect how India—the thinking part of it, and some of the unthinking—has been brought to know about Christ: it has all been done, in Bishop Andrewes' great phrase, "Without might or rhetoric or compulsion," and is all the better for that.

No doubt it's in mission work that you get the most obvious and the most striking results: that is why it's such a blessing that our whole attitude to foreign missions is so unspeakably different from what it was a century ago. I defy anyone to read the accounts of what any mission is doing and not feel sympathetic, and even a bit proud of it: but what I want you to realize is that the same process is going on unseen at home, very slowly, no doubt, but quite unmistakably, as soon as you cease to think about arguments in newspapers, and go and see what's happening in any decently run parish. That's the Church I'm

proud of belonging to, and it's a Church with a future as well as a Church with a not inglorious past.

XII

MY DEAR MARY,—Self-denial in Lent—what good does it do? says you. I might begin by being clever and asking you what you think self-denial means. It's rather a nice game, to ask your friends who know any Greek what they think the Greek for to "deny" oneself is: they'll probably try to think of some word which suggests knocking off sugar in one's tea, and will be surprised when you tell them that it's the same word you'd use if you wanted to "deny" that black was white. I imagine what Our Lord meant by it was that we were always to remind ourselves that *we*, as such, don't matter nearly as much as we think we do: and that's obviously true and well worth remembering. I suppose "conversion" really means turning our heads away from ourselves and in the other direction, and nothing can be more necessary. I

don't know whether it's more disastrous to think too much of yourself or to think of yourself too much, and a great many good people who don't do the first certainly do the second!

So far so good, but that isn't what you really want to know, except in so far as it suggests the general rule that we're too fond of ourselves, and should be better for not treating ourselves quite so kindly. From that point of view I do think that every little helps, and if you do make yourself give up anything you like, however small, you're on the right track. Anyhow, you'll find out that you can—or that you can't—and it's a very good thing to know. Most of us are much too ready to assume that we could give up anything if we thought it worth while: I dare say *you* can, but I don't mind confessing that I find it curiously hard to give up things I like, however trifling they are.

You mustn't blame the Church for concentrating on fish! If you have to legislate, you inevitably narrow down the field, and, human nature being what it is, invite people to get round the law.

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Anyhow, it's not the Church's fault that some people eat turbot instead of mutton in Lent and think they're being good. No laws are fool-proof. I'm handicapped in the fish business by never having eaten fish in my life, and I don't think I ought to begin as a penance in Lent: I might find that I liked it! Obviously every one is at liberty to invent his own rules, but, speaking as one who hates rules and finds them very difficult to keep, I'm pretty sure that we should most of us be the better for making (and keeping) more of them.

But the worst of all this kind of fasting is that it's purely self-regarding, and may, from the larger point of view, do more harm than good: I mean it may encourage you to think too much of yourself, which is the one thing which we really want to avoid. Training (which is the modern translation of asceticism) is a very good thing in its way, but it obviously aims at a personal result, and there we are back at ourselves again!

But, once more I say, don't blame the Church.

If you go to church on Ash Wednesday you'll hear a lesson from Isaiah read which strikes a quite different note. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? . . . to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him?" It seems to me that, if you combine that with the idea of self-denial in the narrower sense, you get something which is practical and interesting. It may, as you say, seem "inconceivably little" to give up some kind of food, or an amusement or two, but if you send the price of your theatre ticket *straight away* to any really poor person you know, I think you'll find there's something in it.

As I think you know, I always try that on the boys at Eton in Lent, and they respond to it every time. I get our missionary to send me an account of a few typically poor cases in Hackney Wick—not specially harrowing ones, for I want to be quite fair—and say, "Now, there you are! *If* you want to do anything in Lent, here's your chance. If you choose to eat a pot of jam less or

a few less eggs, or whatever it is, and send in the money, I'll guarantee that these people get it." I don't say the results are anything tremendous, but there are *some* results, and I'm sure the money is good money as far as it goes. You can't expect the average boy to know the people who want help, and I think he has a right to some personal value for his money—I mean, it wouldn't be the same if he was just asked to put anything he saved into a fund, however virtuous its object.

The only thing I should quarrel with in your letter is your remark that "anything one does seems so immeasurably futile." Of course any given thing one does *is* futile, in the sense that no one person can do much to heal the troubles of the world. But if the Incarnation means anything, it means that our little attempts and infinitesimal achievements aren't futile, but have an eternal value. I seem to see in your remark a trace of the fatal heresy that, because the world is such a small place compared to the universe, things here don't really matter. That's a very alarming thought, but I don't think it's a true one. I was

reading the other day an article by Lord Balfour in which he exposed the fallacy of being too much impressed by the glory of the stars: after all, as he says, we're the people who give them all their glory: apart from us they're just a lot of aggregations of atoms floating about in space. "Vastness" is a tempting theme, and Lord Tennyson wrote a fine bit of rhetorical verse about it, but he ended by saying that love was greater than vastness, and I expect he was right.

I know my powers of imagination are pretty feeble, and refuse to be worried because they won't carry far enough. There was a great deal of sound philosophy in old Sir Thomas Mandeville, who used to say, "Now whether these things be true or no, I know not, but God knows": I think He does, and am prepared to leave it at that. Or again, the author of Ecclesiasticus gave a true warning when he wrote, "Say not thou, I shall be hidden from on high: who shall remember me among so much people? What is my soul in a boundless creation?" That leads straight on to that astounding utterance of Christ, "The

very hairs of your head are all numbered," and the assurance of that last saying settles the question for us. We *do* matter, and old Cowper was right in the hymn we much too seldom sing:

"E'en let th'unknown to-morrow
Bring with it what it may.

It can bring with it nothing
But He will bear us through,
Who gives the lilies clothing
Will clothe His people too:
Beneath the spreading heavens
No creature but is fed,
And He who feeds the ravens
Will give His children bread."

So don't talk about "immeasurable futility" any more, and if you decide to give up sugar, or coffee, or the movies, or the theatre, or whatever it is, in Lent, do it without any doubt that anything you do for a good reason has a value of its own. There's very good reason for believing that a cup of cold water offered at the right time and for the right reason is of quite inestimable worth!

EXTRACT FROM MRS MADDISON'S LETTER

Isn't it time you said something about the problem of evil? I believe I mentioned that in my first letter, and one is always up against it.

Oh, and the Jews! what about the people who say Christianity is all bound up with them? I'm sure I don't want to be: they seem all too like Jacob, who thought anything was right that paid. I've always felt I should have liked Esau ever so much better.

XIII

MY DEAR MARY,—No, I firmly refuse to be drawn into an attempt to “explain” the mystery of evil. A lot of much wiser men than I have had a shot at it, but they don't seem to have done much except to shift it a stage further back, and it doesn't comfort me much to put it somewhere before the world began. But there are two or three things which seem to emerge with some certainty.

For one thing, the Jews never held the view which used to be thought orthodox, that all the

trouble was due to Adam's sin: if they had held that view it's quite inconceivable that they should have never referred to it again. I can't offhand remember any mention of Adam again in the Bible, until we get to Saint Paul. What he thought exactly is to us obscure, but even if he did hold a view I think mistaken, I shouldn't feel bound by it. He knew he was liable to make mistakes, and said so.

Again, I think that, if you don't regard Genesis iii. as an attempt to give a philosophical explanation, it's a wonderfully good story of what sin is: you've got all the elements there—the temptation of the flesh, the world and the devil, all brought together in a story any child can understand, and all the characteristic results of sin, such as trying to put the blame on someone else. I don't think it can be bettered as a story for simple people, showing how that type of evil begins and what its consequences are.

I never can get away from the belief that without the capacity to go wrong freedom would mean nothing at all: I can't conceive God's

wanting to make a mechanical world even if the machines all behaved perfectly. I *can* conceive His thinking that all the troubles which come from any misuse of freedom were worth while because of the infinite value of success, or even of effort: anyhow, whether I can conceive it or not, that seems to me the only explanation, and we English people, who value freedom so much, ought to find it easier to understand than other peoples who don't think the risk worth running. A good man does seem to me to do a lot to justify the existence of the world, and I think that's what Saint Paul meant when he talked of all nature groaning and travailing and "waiting for the revelation of the sons of God."

No doubt that leaves a lot of pain unaccounted for, though a very large proportion of it is due to human sin and human stupidity (which is a form of sin, though not always recognized as such). For the rest, I can only say that much pain is definitely a danger-signal, without which we should die like flies (why does anyone ever have his appendix out, and what would happen

if he didn't?), and much of it does help to bring out those qualities in man which we regard as best. Not to mention nurses, and so on, what would become of any type of sport if there was no risk in it and no pain to be faced?

I quite agree, as I said at the beginning, that these ideas aren't an explanation, but they do seem to me to help us to do without one. What I really feel is that instead of worrying so much about the mystery of evil we might well spend some time in pondering on the mystery of goodness. One very seldom hears that mentioned, but surely it's much more interesting and a great deal more surprising. I can more or less understand why I behave like a beast: I know that I'm descended from them, and I know I've a good deal of the ape and tiger in me, not to mention the pig, or the donkey (which Bishop Creighton called a much more stubborn animal). What I don't understand is why I very occasionally behave, and almost always want to behave, like a saint or a hero—or at any rate, like a gentleman.

Just think of it: here's the human race slowly emerging from the animals: the process has been almost uniformly selfish: every little advance you make is at the expense of someone else: there's no "gospel" in evolution: the survival of the fittest simply means the survival of those fittest to survive, and they only do it by being cleverer or stronger than the rest, and getting the food or drink and shelter that everyone else is trying for. Then when man emerges, and becomes what we call human, he deliberately kicks aside the ladder on which he has mounted, and proclaims, and really believes, however little he may act upon it, that unselfishness is a virtue, and that the finest thing a man can do with his life is to give it away.

Well, that's what I call the mystery of goodness, and I don't know any other explanation except that we have got in us something which isn't purely animal, something which I call divine. That is really the strongest argument for the Christian religion. Any impartial student of human life coming from another planet would

see in that the real mystery which calls for explanation, and I don't see what other explanation he's going to give: there's nothing in our earthly history to suggest that we are capable of inventing this virtue for ourselves: it must have come into us from outside.

And then, with that conviction, which, as I say, is not primarily religious but a mere result of impartial investigation, you find a religion which takes unselfishness as its bedrock. You find Christ declaring that love, which is really the same thing, is the nature of God; you find Him living a life which the world agrees in regarding as perfect, on that assumption, and telling His followers that if they want to get to God that is the road to follow. The two things seem to fit together, and I think we should do better if we started by looking at the world as it is, and then coming to Christ for an answer, than by taking the answer first and then trying to look at the world.

But, mystery for mystery, I've no doubt that the mystery of goodness is the greater, and it isn't merely because I can't answer your question

properly that I say this. Christ never explained sin, any more than He explained suffering: He did a lot to remove suffering and He showed how it should be borne: He did a lot to help people to get away from sin, and I think He does it still, but the great thing to remember is that His teaching was positive and not negative: He "explained" evil by revealing good, and I think that thinking about goodness is a more profitable thing than thinking about evil.

It's the greatest nonsense in the world to talk as if evil was more attractive than good: when Swinburne wrote about the "raptures and roses of vice" and "the lilies and languors of virtue" he was talking of things he'd never tried. We all know that our real danger is not that we shall commit splendid sins but continual squalid little selfish faults, which have nothing rapturous or rosy about them: whereas goodness—real goodness as opposed to mere conformity—is as far from being languorous as anything could be. And the more you think about it the more you'll find it so.

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Anyhow, try that answer on your inquiring friends: "I'll try to explain evil if you'll try to explain goodness": I'm inclined to think that you'll not come out of it worse than they will, and I believe you'll come out of it better!

XIV

MY DEAR MARY,—I've got to begin with an apology: I was talking to a scientific friend, and told him what I'd been saying to you the last time I wrote, and he says my science is dreadfully out of date. He says nature isn't really by any means as selfish as I thought it, and quotes a sentence of Canon Streeter that "the instincts which tend to the survival of the species are always, *in the long run*, more powerful than those which put the individual first." I expect he's right, and my argument wants modifying: if it's the altruistic and co-operative instincts which keep the species going, the world's a better place than I knew, and shows the mystery of goodness beginning further back than I thought it did, but it doesn't affect its mystery, nor alter the

fact that *consciously* to co-operate with it is the chief prerogative of man.

Now for the Jews!

You aren't by any means the first, and you won't be by any means the last, person to be worried about our relationship to the Jewish religion. People don't like Jews, sometimes with good reason, and they don't like to think they're indebted to them, but, as Disraeli was brave enough to point out to the House of Commons, you can't get away from it. Christ was born a Jew and based His teaching on the Jewish prophets, and our services from end to end are full of Jewish history and Jewish poetry and Jewish ideas generally.

I think historians haven't done nearly enough justice to the amazing qualities of the Jewish race: they tend to treat them as a preserve of the theologians, but, even leaving theology out, their record is beyond belief. Fancy a nation sticking together as they have done, in evil times and good! Fancy a little people, carried into exile without any hope except in their own ideas, and

coming out intact, or nearly so! I can't see the English race surviving in those circumstances. It makes one see why Jacob, who, with all his faults, had the power of sticking to things, was the right man to give his name to the race. I wish they'd been called Jacobites instead of Israelites, though it might have been a little confusing.

And then, still leaving the rightness or wrongness of their theology out of it, there can be no question of their historical importance. As Lecky says—and he wasn't an orthodox Christian by any means—that little people has profoundly influenced all of what we call the most progressive nations of the world. It seems to me that you must allow that they had a genius for religion in the same sort of way, and to quite as great a degree, as the Greeks had a genius for art or the Romans for government. If you compare the sort of views which their best men, the prophets, came to hold about God with even the greatest Greek ideas, you see their superiority, and there's the other difference that the great Greeks came

to their conclusions by hard thinking while the Jews did it instinctively. Amos, the first of them, is alternatively described as a herdsman and “a pincher of sycamore figs” (whatever that may mean), neither of which professions suggests much research, and that’s why there’s no other word than inspiration to explain the sort of things he said.

The Old Testament is a book of growth: it contains countless crudities, and its best men aren’t perfect, but you get the feeling all through that you’re studying the growth of character, just as the whole book is the history of a nation’s growth in its ideas about God—the one subject they really cared about. It’s disastrous to treat it as all equally inspired, and disastrous not to recognize that the greatest parts of it are to be found in the Prophets, the Psalms and the Book of Job. I came the other day on an advertisement in an educational publisher’s catalogue of “Genesis to Esther—the parts usually read in schools”—and I couldn’t deny there was a horrible truth in it. The excuse is that they’re

easier to understand, but it's a very bad one, and I made up my mind that, if I could help it, no boy should leave Eton without at least being told why we really read the Old Testament.

But if you will meditate on the fact that the Psalms do still manage to put into words for us just what we want to say in certain moods, and will ask yourself what other nation's hymn-book could be even tolerable for daily use, you'll realize something of our debt, and will be as ready to admire their contribution to the world as you are to admire the Elgin marbles. The Psalms are at least as eternal as the Parthenon, and for very similar reasons.

But though I'll yield to no one in my admiration for the religious genius of the Jews, I sometimes wonder whether we aren't unduly handicapped by following them too closely. Carlyle used to write bitterly about "Jewish old clothes," and advocate what he called an "Exodus from Houndsditch," and though he went a great deal further than I should go, I think there was some ground for his complaint. I believe a good many

people are needlessly bothered by words like "atonement" and "propitiation," which don't occur in the Christian creeds, though one of them does—rather unfortunately, as I think—in the Communion Service. Again, I don't feel that the Jewish idea of sacrifice deserves all the prominence it sometimes gets. Perhaps that is only my ignorance, but it seems to me mainly valuable as a contrast to self-sacrifice, which, as the great Jews know, is the only kind which really deserves the name.

Perhaps it is foolish to bother about the word "blood," but it meant something so different to the Jews from what it means to us that I'm sorry it plays such a part in our hortatory and devotional literature: they saw in it the principle of life: we don't; and to use a metaphor which isn't natural encourages false sentiment and gives needless offence. After all, we were warned against putting new wine into old bottles, and some of the oldest bottles we use are inevitably of Jewish origin.

But these are comparatively small things, and

I'd rather talk of our debts. They are the most tragic people in history: it gives me a cold shiver every time I hear us sing about Christ coming to be the glory of His people Israel: for He is at once their glory and their shame. They fought so hard to hold the truths they'd got, and all the time they thought, as most privileged peoples do, that their privileges were their reward instead of being their opportunity: and so they missed their chance, and down the pages of history goes ringing their last appalling cry: "We have no king but Cæsar." Think what Cæsar's done for them throughout the centuries, and what Christ might have done—and then get Jim to play you on the gramophone Stanford's setting of the *Nunc dimittis* in B flat—where the basses repeat the last words by themselves. It's heart-rending.

But don't go saying you can't see why Jacob was allowed to swindle Esau out of his birthright: the whole point is that whereas Jacob thought he was being clever because the birthright was a prize for a good boy, it was really a responsibility, and he had to be fitted for it. Esau went

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off and hunted and shot happily till he died: Jacob, just because he'd got the birthright, never knew another day's peace. He had to be cured of lying to begin with, and he was cured in the only possible way, by being made to go and live with a greater liar than himself, Laban, who swindled him continuously. At last, when poor Jacob died, lied to by all his sons, he'd learnt something—but he's a tragic figure well fitted to be the ancestor of the most tragic race in history.

XV

MY DEAR MARY,—I haven't time to write a letter in Holy Week, and I don't want to. So I'm sending you instead a little thing I wrote the other day, which you can read on Easter Eve, and show to Jim if he's in a good temper. He'll tell you the science is all wrong, I'm sure!

A DREAM

I heard the other day a horrible theory about sound—that no sound ever really dies, and that if you got the right wave-length, or whatever it's

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called, you could hear everything that's ever been said in a particular place. The idea by itself is a kind of nightmare, and I suppose that combined with the fact that I have just been in Jerusalem to give me this particular dream.

Anyhow, there I was in the streets of Jerusalem: I could recognize some of the houses, though it was almost quite dark. And as I went by what they call the palace of the high priest I heard a voice: it sounded like the voice of a very old man, and it said, "Is the sepulchre sure?"

And a voice answered and said, "We have made it as sure as we can: we have sealed the stone and set a watch."

And the other voice replied, "It is well: remember what that deceiver said when he was yet alive"; and Caiaphas answered, "Said I not wisely that it was expedient that one man should die for the people?"

And, as I passed on my way, I came where the governor's house stood, and I heard the voice of a woman saying, "What doeth my lord Pilate?" And her women answered her, saying,

“He cannot rest, but walketh ever to and fro, and as he walketh he muttereth to himself.”

“And what saith he?” said Pilate’s wife; and they made answer, “We heard him cry aloud and say, ‘What is truth?’ and again he muttered, ‘The dream was true, the dream was true.’”

And I heard the lady cry out for sorrow.

And I passed on from the houses of the great to the lower streets of the city, and as I passed the window of a small house I heard two that talked in their window, for the night was hot and they could not sleep. And one said to the other, “Ah, wretched that we are! See what has come of our mother’s prayer!” And his brother answered, “We could not even drink of the cup—how did we dare to ask a throne?”

And for a while there was silence, and then one cried with an exceeding bitter cry and said, “Ah, James, my brother, I see it now! The thrones were ready, but we were not ready.”

And James made answer, “What thrones?”

And John said, “Our Master’s throne was a Cross, and there stood a cross on either side: a

cross prepared for us, but we were not worthy." And he groaned within himself and said, "Too late! Too late!"

And there was silence for a while, and then, for it was very near the dawn, I heard the voice of a cock that crew, and close on the sound there followed an exceeding bitter cry, and I knew it for the voice of Peter who could not sleep for sorrow, and for thinking of the Master he had denied.

And I passed away from that sad street, and wandered I knew not where; and the next sound that I heard was that of footsteps, and the rustle of the dresses of women: and I stood aside in a doorway to let them pass: and the night drew on towards morning.

And after a while I heard footsteps, as of a woman that returned in haste, and a voice that called upon Peter and on John: and soon thereafter there came the noise of two men running, a young man swift of foot, and another that followed more heavily behind: and as I wondered at these things, of a sudden the dawn came, and the sky grew bright and the birds

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sang, and I knew it was the dawning of the first Easter Day. And I heard the song which the birds sang, and it seemed to frame itself into words like these :

“ Sing, brothers, sing, and praise your King !
Gone is the night of sorrow !
Have ye not heard His royal word,
‘ God careth for the sparrow ’ ?
Our watch we kept while others slept,
We saw where Joseph laid Him,
Saw women bring their offering,
The last sad tribute paid Him.
But now from us they’ll borrow
Songs for a joyful morrow !

For we have heard a greater word,
And seen a greater glory ;
Sing, brothers, sing this fair morning,
And tell the world the story !
We heard a voice that bade rejoice,
Where late Our Lord was lying,
No more, it saith, shall there be Death
Sorrow nor pain nor crying !
And men from birds may borrow
Songs for a glad to-morrow ! ”

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

“WELL, you know, I’m not convinced,” said Jim.

We had been playing a mild game of golf and were strolling homewards: as far as I could remember, our last argument had been on the question whether I had taken eight at the sixteenth hole or only seven, as I claimed, and I was at a loss to understand why he should still be brooding on that.

“Well, I told you, I took only three in the bunker,” I began.

“Don’t be an ass!” he interrupted rudely; “I’m not talking about your preposterous arithmetic, I’m talking about religion. Mary has shown me all those letters you’ve been writing her——”

“They weren’t meant for you,” I put in.

“I know they weren’t, but I’ve read them

all the same. I don't say they're bad letters, from your point of view, I mean, but they don't convince me."

"My dear old Jim," I retorted, "they didn't even aim at convincing Mary! They were only an attempt to answer a few of her questions. I'm not at all sure I believe in convincing anybody: anyhow, if I did, I shouldn't try to do it by argument."

"There you go again, sheering off the point! A thing's either true or false, and you talk as if it didn't really matter."

"Oh, come," I said, "that's hardly fair! I never hinted it didn't matter: I shouldn't have bothered to write all those letters if I thought that. What I meant was that things aren't *demonstrably* true or false in the sense you scientific people want. I *should* like to convince you that religion was very well worth bothering about, but I don't suppose that's what you mean by conviction."

Jim was silent for a few moments.

"I rather liked what you said about other

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people's faiths," he said at last. "If all parsons were broad-minded like that——"

"I hate that epithet 'broad,'" I interrupted. "If it's applied to a river it generally means it's shallow, and if it's applied to a story it always means it's dirty: and when you apply it to a man's views you mean he doesn't know what he thinks. You wouldn't dream of calling a scientist broad-minded as a compliment."

"Well, I'll say 'open-minded' if you prefer it," answered Jim, laughing. "I'm all for open-minded scientists!"

"Good!" said I; "we'll agree about that. But all the same I think it's silly to say you won't bother about religion till all the clergy are open-minded. I might as well say I wouldn't read poetry as long as any bad poetry was produced. The less I like Georgian poets the more I read the Elizabethans!"

"Oh, confound you and your analogies!" retorted Jim. "Do keep to the point! I tell you I'm not convinced that God exists, I'm not convinced there's a future life, I'm not convinced

that your Church is anything like what Christ wanted, I'm not convinced of anything except that a man's got to do the best he can and get on with his job."

"I wish I knew why you were convinced about those last things," I said. "I think it's much easier to believe that the world was made by a God Who cares about us than to believe that one's got to behave nicely in a world which exists only by a fluke. But that's your affair: I think you'll get there in the end."

"I shan't!" said Jim defiantly. "You won't see me in church, except now and then, just to please Mary."

"I wasn't talking about church," I said patiently. "I was talking about heaven."

"Oh, heaven!" said Jim impatiently; "I don't look forward to singing hymns for ever and ever, amen!"

"For a musician," I retorted, "that is a very unmusical retort. I can't see what reason you have to think it's my idea of bliss. When I say 'heaven,' I mean the presence of God, and if

you think that means nothing but hymns, I can only say your mind's a lot less open than you think it is. I don't ask you to be tied by mediæval ideas of science: why should you ask me to be tied by mediæval pictures of heaven?"

"But if there's no God——"

"Well, if there isn't, of course we shan't see Him, either of us! My point was that I think you'll see Him, if you stick to what you say. But I think you've chosen the longer road: you're a crypto-Baptist, you see!"

"A what?" said Jim indignantly: "I've never been to a Baptist service in my life."

"I mean a secret follower of John the Baptist," I explained. "You see, John was a great exponent of the religion of Duty. He told everyone just what to do, and a lot of them went and did it: they thought it was common sense, just as you do."

"Well, isn't it?" he retorted. "I should think even you would agree that a religion must be founded on common sense."

"Perhaps," said I, "but I'm quite sure it can't

get far without a dash of what I should call Uncommon Non-sense. John the Baptist said that if you had two coats you ought to give one away: Christ said that if a man stole your cloak you ought to give him your coat too. Whatever that may be, it isn't common sense: it's the non-sense talked by the old Bishop in *Les Miserables*, but it's jolly good nonsense.

"I've never read the book," said Jim.

"What an illiterate brute you are!" I said, with disgust. "It's one of the best books in the world, at any rate for the first hundred pages or so. The thief stole almost all his silver plate, and the Bishop fetched him back and said: 'Why not take the candlesticks too?' You read it: it'll do you a power of good. Anyhow, Christ said that when a man forced you to go one mile you should go two: do you call that common sense?"

"I never did see the point of that," said Jim.

"Oh, come!" said I. "The Roman was passing your garden and he made you chuck your job and carry his luggage, as he had a perfect

right to do, for one mile. At the end of the mile he says, 'That'll do: you can go now!' And you say, 'Well, if I don't carry this beastly luggage, I suppose some other poor brute will have his morning spoilt: I'll go on another mile.' And you go the second mile much more happily, because you're doing it to please yourself: and the Roman says to himself, 'Rum fellows these Christians!' I call that a good bit of nonsense myself—and nonsense that works."

"It might, in that case," conceded Jim. "It would be a bit of a score, certainly. But what about those two roads you were talking about?"

"Oh, I think the road of Duty is a good well-paved road: a bit long, perhaps, but very well made, and you find some good company on it. The other road, which I should call the road of Love, takes short cuts over the mountains: better views up there, you know. It's a bit dangerous in places and sometimes you envy the people on the hard road——"

"Now I understand why you keep off the fairway such a lot," put in Jim maliciously.

“Don’t be frivolous! But both my ways are ways that lead to God: John the Baptist led his people down one, and Christ leads His people along the other, but both meet at the Inn at the world’s end, where there are beds for all who come.”

“By the way, that reminds me,” said Jim, “will you awfully mind sleeping on the sofa in my dressing-room? I ought to have warned you, but I didn’t know till this morning, and it was too late to let you know. I didn’t tell you earlier for fear of putting you off your game.”

“Quite needless,” I said reassuringly. “My game is the sort of game I never mind being put off. But what’s happened? Have all your aunts and uncles come to stay unexpectedly?”

“No, it’s not that,” said Jim, rather shamefacedly. “It’s all Mary’s fault really. You know that old bounder who made things so unpleasant when we came?—lives just next door, and always objected to every mortal thing we wanted to do. Then when Mary tried to get the vicar to do something in church—one of your jolly ideas, I think it was—he got up a row at the parochial

church council and was very offensive. I can't stand the chap myself."

"All this is very interesting," said I, "but I don't see its bearing on my sofa: has he collared some of your beds?"

"Not exactly," said Jim, blushing a little, "but the old chap's had a stroke or something, and it turns out they're desperately hard up. We've got up some sort of a fund for him—it was Mary's idea really—and shifted him off to a nursing home, where they make you pay through the nose. But then there was his wife and two kids—not bad little brutes, I must say: well, they got a chance of getting rid of their house at a bargain, and they can't afford to keep it, so Mary said last night we'd take them all in for a month, just to give them time to look round, you know. It's a beastly nuisance, but we can just get them in if we turn my study into a bedroom. So you see where we are: but of course you ought to have been told."

"Oh, that's all right," said I. "I quite see you couldn't help it: it's just common sense."

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Jim eyed me with some suspicion, but I went on without giving him time to interrupt.

“ I’m really very good at sofas, and if I lie awake it’ll give me time to recall what it was exactly that happened at the sixteenth hole. Hullo! there’s Mary!” I went on, as we came in sight of the house and I saw her in the garden, engaged in some complicated sport with two unknown children.

We walked on in silence for a few yards.

“ You know,” said Jim suddenly. “ If anything made me believe in your jolly old theories it wouldn’t be your rotten arguments.”

“ No?” I said encouragingly.

“ It’d be Mary,” said Jim, with some determination.

“ Good!” said I.



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